NATION

TN bans production, storage and sale of mayonnaise

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Govt offers sops to boost coal mining

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SPORTS

Chennai take on Hyderabad in a battle of survival

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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India stops visas as Pak ends Simla pact

Pak closes airspace for Indian flights, says stopping of Indus water will be considered act of war

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

India on Thursday announced suspending visa services to Pakistani nationals with immediate effect in line with its retaliatory measures against Islamabad. This was in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said all existing valid visas issued by India to Pakistani nationals stand revoked from 27 April. It said medical visas issued to Pakistanis will be valid only till 29 April.

It also advised Indians to avoid travelling to Pakistan and advised those currently in the neighbouring country to return home "at the earliest".

Meanwhile, Pakistan said any move to divert water meant for it under the Indus Water Treaty will be considered an "act of war" as it announced the suspension of trade, bilateral accords, including the Simla Agreement among other moves in retaliation to New Delhi's measures against the country.

The announcements were made after a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to formulate the country's response to India's move to suspend the Indus Water Treaty and downgrade diplomatic ties.

Pakistan to test missile

Pakistan has issued a no-fly zone in the Arabian Sea and warned of live fire, with sailors also advised to stay away from the area. The announcement comes as Pakistan prepares to test a new missile. The missile, reported to have a range of 480km is expected to be tested between 24 and 25 April.

Border closed; visas cancelled

Pakistan will also close down the Wagah Border Post with immediate effect.

"Those who have crossed with valid endorsements may return through that route by 30 April," Pakistan stated.

Pakistan also suspended all visas under the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme (SVES) issued to Indians and deems them cancelled with immediate effect, with the exception of Sikh religious pilgrims.

Pakistan's airspace will be closed with immediate effect for all Indian-owned or Indian-operated airlines. Pakistan declared the Indian Defence, Naval and Air Advisers in Islamabad "persona non grata". They are directed to leave Pakistan by 30 April.

The strength of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad will be reduced to 30 diplomats and staff members, with effect from 30 April, it said.

Family members and relatives mourn during the funeral of Sushil Nathaniel, who was killed in Pahalgam terrorist attack, at his residence in Indore on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

- Terrorists opened fire in Pahalgam on Tuesday, killing 26 people, mostly tourists, in the deadliest attack in the Valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019.

Will reciprocate, says Pak

Pakistan says it unequivocally condemns terrorism. It remains committed to peace but will never allow anyone to transgress its sovereignty, security, dignity, and their inalienable rights, the statement said.

"Any threat to Pakistan's sovereignty and to the security of its people will be met with firm reciprocal measures in all domains.

India should refrain from its reflexive blame game and cynical, staged, managed exploitation of incidents like Pahalgam to further its narrow political agenda.

Terrorists opened fire in Pahalgam on Tuesday, killing 26 people, mostly tourists, in the deadliest attack in the Valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019. The Resistance Front, a proxy of the banned Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), claimed responsibility for the attack. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Pages 2, 3 & 5*

What is the Simla Agreement?

- It is a peace treaty between India and Pakistan that was signed after the 1971 war.
- It was aimed at restoring peace between India, Pak.
- It was signed in Shimla by ex-PM Indira Gandhi and her counterpart Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (in pic).
- One key result of the agreement was the creation of the LOC in Kashmir.
- The agreement also called on both sides to avoid the use or threat of force, and to respect each other's political independence.
- India handed back over 13,000 km² of territory captured during the war but it retained the Chorbat Valley, including Turtuk and Tyakshi.

With rare switch to English, PM vows revenge

PM Narendra Modi, who has used Hindi even in international platforms, made a rare switch to English on Thursday to reach out to foreign powers and gain allies after the Pahalgam attack. Addressing a rally in Bihar's Madhubani, Modi said, "India will identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backers". Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron, Jordan's King Abdullah II, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on dialled Modi and conveyed their solidarity with India.

Army soldier killed in Udhampur encounter

JAMMU, 24 APRIL

A soldier of the special forces of the Army was killed in an encounter between security forces and terrorists following a search operation in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district on Thursday, officials said.

The firing took place in the Dudu-Basantgarh area during a cordon and search operation that was launched based on information about the presence of terrorists, they said.

"Based on specific intelligence, a joint operation with Jammu and Kashmir Police was launched today in the Basantgarh area of Udhampur," the White Knight Corps said on X.

Contact was established, and a fierce firefight ensued, it said.

The deceased soldier is **Havaldar Jhantu Ali Sheikh** of 6 Para of the Special Forces.

Four suspects were also picked up for the area for questioning.

This is the third encounter between terrorists and security forces in Jammu in the past over 24 hours.

On Wednesday, an encounter broke out after terrorists opened fire on security personnel during a cordon and search operation in Tangmarg area of Kulgam district of south Kashmir.

The Indian Army foiled an infiltration bid in the Uri Nala area of Baramulla, killing two terrorists amid an intense firefight on Wednesday.

Udhampur district's Basantgarh belt has witnessed a chain of terror incidents in the past one year.

On 9 April, an encounter broke out between security forces and terrorists in the Jopher-Marta belt of Ramnagar, Udhampur district. However, the terrorists managed to escape.

Meanwhile, Border Security Force (BSF) jawan was detained by Pakistan Rangers after he accidentally crossed the Punjab border and talks are on between the two forces to secure his release, officials said on Thursday. —*PTI*

At Arni University in Himachal Pradesh, students were harassed and branded 'terrorists' by Right-wing mobs who broke hostel doors and forced students to flee **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

RIGHT-WING GROUPS ASSAULT KASHMIRI STUDENTS ACROSS INDIA

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

Kashmiri students across Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Punjab are facing a surge in violence, threats, and communal abuse in the aftermath of the Pahalgam attack, the Jammu and Kashmir Students Association reported.

At Arni University in Himachal Pradesh, students were harassed and branded "terrorists" by Right-wing mobs who broke hostel doors and forced students to flee. In Uttarakhand, Hindu Raksha Dal issued open threats, demanding all Kashmiri Muslim students leave the state by 10am Thursday. Written threats have also been sent to colleges in Dehradun.

Around 20 terrified students from BFIT College fled to Jolly Grant Airport fearing for their lives. In Punjab, students at Universal Group of Institutions in Derabassi were attacked with sharp weapons inside hostels. At least one student sustained serious injuries, while security staff failed to intervene and police response was delayed. "This is not just a law-and-order issue—it is a targeted hate campaign," said Association spokesperson Nasir Khuehami, condemning the inaction of authorities. —*Agencies*

CM Siddaramaiah and Governor Thawarchand Gehlot consoled the family of Bharath Bhushan after paying their last respects to him at his residence in Mathikere, Bengaluru, on Thursday. The last rites of two tourists from Karnataka who were killed in Pahalgam were performed with police honours. **PHOTO: SALAR**

177 STRANDED K'TAKA TOURISTS RETURN FROM KASHMIR

BENGALURU, 24 APRIL

A total of 177 tourists from Karnataka stranded in Kashmir following the terror attack in Pahalgam returned safely to Bengaluru on Thursday. Another 13 are expected by Friday, officials confirmed.

The tourists were flown to Kempegowda International Airport. The 22 April attack near Baisaran Valley saw militants open fire on tourists. One victim, 48-year-old realtor Manjunath Rao from Shivamogga, was shot dead in front of his wife, Pallavi, and son. "We thought it was a military drill," Pallavi told **Salar News**. "Manjunath had stepped aside to buy something when they asked his name and shot him." "We were in Gulmarg when we heard about the attack. We stayed in the lodge until rescue teams reached us," Padmashree, a techie, said.

Karnataka Cabinet adopted a resolution condemning the terrorist attack and accused the Union Home Ministry and intelligence agencies of "failing" to prevent it. —*Salar News*

>>>*More on Page 2*

Oppn backs govt to destroy terror camps

BENGALURU, 24 APRIL

Leaders across party lines assured their support to the government in taking decisive action against terrorism and destroying terror camps. This was as they flagged security lapses in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam, where 26 people were gunned down by terrorists.

During an all-party meeting to discuss the Pahalgam terror attack, the government said it was taking all measures to ensure security. It noted that the attack was aimed at vitiating the atmosphere at a time when the economy was on the upswing and tourism was booming in Jammu and Kashmir.

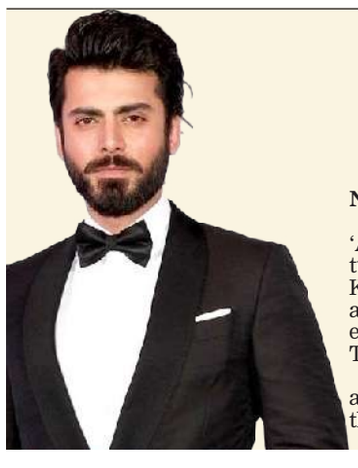
Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said everyone at the meeting unequivocally condemned the terror attack and offered full support to the government.

Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said there has been a security lapse and the government did not act promptly after the attack.

Some leaders, including Kharge and AAP's Sanjay Singh, pointed out the absence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the meeting and said that he should have been present.

While Defence Minister Rajnath Singh initiated the discussion at the meeting, Intelligence Bureau Director Tapan Deka gave all leaders a 20-minute briefing on the attack and how it happened. —*PTI*

BAN ON PAK ARTISTES?



Fawad Khan's 'Abir Gulaal' not to release in India: Sources

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

'Abir Gulaal', a Hindi film featuring Pakistani star Fawad Khan in the lead, will not be allowed to release in India, government sources said on Thursday.

Directed by Aarti S Bagdi and also starring Vaani Kapoor, the movie was set to make its debut in Indian cinemas on 9 May.

The action comes amid calls for a ban on the movie after Pahalgam terror attacks. It is being described as the deadliest attack in the Valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019.

On Wednesday, the Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) reiterated its directive to ban Pakistani artists. They called for a complete non-cooperation with all Pakistani artists, singers, and technicians within the Indian film and entertainment industry.

"In light of the recent attack in Pahalgam, FWICE is once again compelled to issue a blanket boycott on all Pakistani artists, singers and technicians participating in any Indian film or entertainment projects. This includes performances or collaborations occurring anywhere in the world," the FWICE had said in a statement.

The industry workers' union, which had issued a similar directive in February 2019 after the Pulwama terror attack, also warned that it will take disciplinary action against those who work with Pakistani artists. Fawad, whose last Hindi film appearance in 2016's 'Ae Dil Hai Mushkil' had condemned the Pahalgam attack on Instagram story on Wednesday night.

"Deeply saddened to hear the news of the heinous attack in Pahalgam. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of this horrifying incident," the 'Zindagi Gulzar Hai' star wrote. Despite this however, the call to ban his film grew and resonated with many. 'Abir Gulaal' is produced by Indian Stories Production, along with A Richer Lens and Aarjay Pictures. —PTI

Plantation worker trampled to death by jumbo in Virajpet

MYSURU, 24 APRIL

A 59-year-old plantation worker, Challadore Mestri, was trampled to death by a wild elephant at Emmegundi Coffee Plantation, owned by Tata Group, near Polybetta in Virajpet taluk, Kodagu, on Thursday. The incident occurred around 6.15 am when Mestri, who lived with his family at the plantation, went for a routine walk. A wild elephant, part of a herd moving between estates, attacked and killed him on the spot, according to eyewitnesses. Though nearby workers rushed to help upon hearing his screams, the elephant trampled him before they could intervene. Residents living in constant fear around Emmegundi Estate, along with other coffee planters in Virajpet taluk, have urged the government to act swiftly. They highlighted that wild elephants are not only destroying crops but are also claiming the lives of workers. *—PTI*

Sister dies of heart attack after seeing brother's body

MYSURU, 24 APRIL

A woman died of a heart attack after seeing the body of her younger brother, who had also died of cardiac arrest. The incident occurred on Thursday in Kodagahalli village, BG Pura hobli, Malavalli taluk, Mandya district. The deceased Shivamma, 72, a retired sericulture department employee, and her brother Venkatesh, 52, an outsourcing staffer at the horticulture department in Kollegal. Venkatesh died early Thursday, and his body was brought to their native village. Shivamma collapsed while mourning beside his body and was declared dead. Venkatesh's last rites were held in Kodagahalli, while Shivamma's will take place in Kollegal on Friday. Belakawadi Police have registered a case. *—Salar News*

Free limb fitment camp in City to benefit 700

BENGALURU, 24 APRIL

Udaipur-based Narayan Seva Sansthan will host a free prosthetic limb fitment camp on Sunday at Maratha Hostel Ground, Bull Temple Road, Basavanagudi, from 8am to 5pm. Over 700 pre-registered differently-abled individuals, identified during a measurement camp in February, will receive German-technology prosthetic limbs.The event will also feature a grand inauguration and International Awards Ceremony at 11am, with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah among the invited dignitaries. Post-fitment, recipients will receive mobility training from a 60-member expert team. Director Vinod Jain said the initiative, ongoing for over 40 years, aims to restore dignity and independence. The Sansthan has fitted over 40,000 artificial limbs and holds weekly camps in India and abroad. *—Salar News*

KSRTC conductor sexually harasses woman on bus

MANGALURU, 24 APRIL

A contract conductor with the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has been arrested for sexually harassing a woman passenger onboard a public bus, after a video of the incident went viral on social media, sparking widespread outrage. The accused, Pradeep Kashappa Naikar, 35 from Bagalkot, was taken into custody by Konaje police on Thursday. According to police, Naikar was caught on video "misbehaving" with a woman commuter while she was asleep. The video, filmed by another passenger, was circulated widely online, drawing sharp condemnation and prompting swift police action. The incident took place on Wednesday on a KSRTC bus operating along the Mudipu–State Bank route near Mangaluru. *—PTI*

Cabinet meet at MM Hills approves ₹3,647 cr projects

Kollegal gets Rs 250 cr for a new 250-bed hospital

MYSURU, 24 APRIL

A special cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah atop Male Mahadeshwara Hills in Hanur taluk, Chamarajanagar district, on Thursday approved development projects worth Rs 3,647.62 crore for Mysuru region.

The meeting, which discussed 78 issues, is part of the State government's initiative to hold Cabinet sessions across Karnataka's regions. Similar meetings were previously held in Kalaburagi, where 57 issues were discussed. Future meetings are planned for Nandi Hills (Bengaluru division) and Vijayapura (Belagavi division).

Siddaramaiah announced major allocations, including Rs 228 crore for health sector upgrades and Rs 250 crore for a new 250-bed district hospital in Kollegal. A Rs 315 crore drinking water project and Rs 210 crore for rail barricade fencing to prevent human-animal conflict in Chamarajanagar were also approved.

The Cabinet also sanctioned Rs 300 crore for tourism development, Rs 101 crore for expanding the runway at Mysuru airport, and Rs 100 crore to convert the Old DC office in Mysuru into a museum. An international cricket stadium will be built at Yelwal, Mysuru, and a Rs 15 crore sports stadium in Chamarajanagar was approved.

Rs 475 crore was allocated to fill 110 lakes in Gundlupet, while a new tourist guest house and Travellers Bungalow will be constructed in Chamarajanagar. Projects were also cleared for tribal settlement road development, rural upliftment, and works by PWD, Power, and Irrigation departments.

Deputy CM DK Shivakumar approved Mysuru City Corporation's Rs 390 crore white-topping project for city roads.

The cabinet also announced the formation of Rachappaji, Siddappaji, and Manteswamy Development Centres in Chikkalur, Kollegal taluk, and allocated Rs 40 crore for the development of Badanavalu Khadi Village Industries Centre in Nanjangud.

The meeting began with a minute's silence, paying respects to 26 victims of the Pahalgam terror attack and the late Pope.

—Salar News with Agencies

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and DyCM DK Shivakunar in a Cabinet meeting at MM Hils **PHOTO: ANI**

- An international cricket stadium will be built at Yelwal, Mysuru, and a Rs 15 crore sports stadium in Chamarajanagar was approved for Mysuru region.

CM alerts cops on overstaying foreign nationals

CHAMARAJANAGAR, 24 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday said police have been asked to be vigilant about foreigners overstaying in the state.

His comments come against the backdrop of the terror attack in Kashmir's Pahalgam that left at least 26 people dead on Tuesday.

"I have told the police to remain cautious," Siddaramaiah said. *—PTI*

Chief Minister ordered the use of Nandini ghee in the preparation of laddu prasadamS **PHOTO: PTI**

MM HILLS DECLARED LIQUOR FREE

MYSURU, 24 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has declared MM Hills in Hanur taluk, Chamarajanagar district, a completely liquor-free zone. The announcement was made during a review meeting of the MM Hills Development Authority held atop the shrine after a special cabinet session on Thursday.

The CM has banned the sale, transport, and consumption of liquor in all areas of MM Hills, including bringing alcohol from nearby towns. The Excise Department has been directed to crack down on offenders, particularly repeat violators.

In a move to improve prasadam quality, the Chief Minister ordered the use of Nandini ghee in the preparation of laddu prasadam, modelled after Tirupati. Each 100g laddu will now be sold at Rs 35.

The meeting approved Rs 12 crore for constructing 66 staff quarters and criticised delays in setting up bus shelters and toilet facilities at the shrine *—Salar News*

'Chamarajanagar to lose backward tag'

MYSURU, 24 APRIL

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday said the government is working to shed Chamarajanagar's "backward district" tag by initiating key development works.

A special cabinet meeting approved several projects, including Rs 85 crore each for 100-bed hospitals in Tagadur and Saligrama, Rs 50 crore for electrification of tribal hamlets, Rs 98 crore to fill 25 lakes in Kadur and Ajjampura, and Rs 198 crore for Harangi lift irrigation. Projects also include irrigation works in Mysuru, Mandya, and Chikkamagalur districts, and Rs 92 crore for Cauvery Arathi at Srirangapatna. Rs 150 crore was approved for the third phase of Cauvery drinking water from Malangi. — Salar News.

'Intel failures led to terror attack'

BENGALURU, 24 APR

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday paid respects to Bharath Bhushan, who was shot dead in the terrorist attack at Pahalgam in Jammu-Kashmir He urged the central government to eliminate terrorists and ensure that such incidents don't repeat.

He said the Centre should not have relaxed the restrictions in the terrorist infested Pahalgam district.

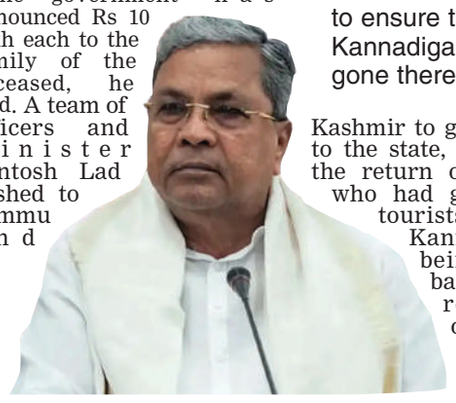
He also added that terrorists have no religion. He blamed intelligence failure in stopping the attack from happening. Bodies of two tourists from Karnataka who were killed by the terrorists in the Pahalgam terror attack were brought to the Kempegowda International Airport here on Thursday.

Manjunath Rao and Bharath were among the 26 people killed on Tuesday.

While Rao's body was taken to his hometown Shivamogga, Bushan's body was brought to his residence in Bengaluru.

Citing the Pulwama terror incident in which around 40 soldiers were killed, he said, "Now this incident has happened. It should be ensured that such incidents don't repeat."

The government has announced Rs 10 lakh each to the family of the deceased, he said. A team of officers and Minister Santosh Lad rushed to Jammu and Kashmir to get back bodies to the state, and to ensure the return of Kannadigas who had gone there as tourists. Over 177 Kannadigas are being brought back. "It is the responsibility of the government," the CM said. *—PTI*



- The government has announced Rs 10 lakh each to the family of the deceased, he said. A team of officers and Minister Santosh Lad rushed to Jammu and Kashmir to get back bodies to the state, and to ensure the return of Kannadigas who had gone there as tourists.

ZERO SHADOW DAY

Visitors observe Zero Shadow Day during a demonstration at Nehru Planetarium in Bengaluru on Thursday. During Zero Shadow Day, the sun reaches its zenith, causing vertical objects to cast no visible shadows as they fall directly beneath them **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

BBMP cracks down on illegal ads in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 24 APRIL

In a major move to tackle unauthorised advertising, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has introduced a revised Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), empowering citizens and officers alike.

Under the new directive, control rooms will be established in the offices of Assistant Executive Engineers citywide, enabling the public to report illegal hoardings, banners, and flex boards. These officers are now authorised to oversee removal and lodge FIRs at local police stations against violators. Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath, announcing the changes on Thursday, confirmed that this SOP replaces the earlier version and aims to restore visual order across Bengaluru. Zonal Commissioners have been instructed to set up BBMP Advertisement Regulation Teams comprising engineers and marshals. *—Salar News*

Muslim leaders condemn Pahalgam attack, call for unity

Muslim leaders condemn the Pahalgam attack at Press Club in Bengaluru on Thursday **PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD**

BENGALURU 24 APRIL

Prominent Muslim scholars and leaders from the state have strongly condemned the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Anantnag district of South Kashmir on 22 April, which claimed the lives of 26 innocent civilians. The ulema expressed deep sorrow, called the violence "un-Islamic and inhuman," and demanded exemplary punishment for the perpetrators.

Moulana Maqsood Imran Rashadi, Imam of Jamia Masjid, Bengaluru, said, "Killing innocent people in the name of religion is not only against Islam but a crime against humanity. Such acts defile the teachings of our faith and must be rejected outright."

President of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind Karnataka, Dr Saad Belgami added that no cause, political or ideological, can justify this bloodshed. The attackers are enemies of Islam and enemies of peace.

Moulana Syed Shabbir Hussain Nadvi of Naasih Foundation appealing for peace and unity demanded the government to bring the perpetrators to swift and exemplary justice.

In solidarity with the victims, Imams across the country will deliver anti-terror sermons during Friday prayers and pray for the speedy recovery of the injured. *—Salar News*

RPF rescues 10 boys trafficked from Bihar

KOLAR, 24 APRIL

The Railway Protection Force (RPF) at Bangarpet rescued 10 children from Bihar on Wednesday, suspected to be victims of trafficking. The children, aged 10 to 15, were found alone in a Kaziranga Express compartment during a routine check by the RPF's Anti-Human Trafficking Unit around 11:30 am. They said they were from Araria, Bihar, and were headed to a Madrasa in Malur for higher education. The person accompanying them had allegedly gone to buy tickets but never returned.

On further questioning, the children revealed they were promised education in engineering and medicine at the Madrasa. With no guardian showing up, RPF Inspector Suresh alerted the District Child Protection Unit. The children were handed over to the Children Welfare Committee in KGF. *— Salar News*

CCB takes over ex-DGP's murder case

BENGALURU 24 APRIL

The City Crime Branch (CCB) has formally taken over the investigation into the shocking murder of retired Director General of Police (DGP) Om Prakash, who was brutally stabbed to death allegedly by his wife Pallavi, earlier this week. Following initial proceedings by HSR Layout Police, the case was handed over to the CCB on Wednesday. The probe is now being led by ACP Dharmendra from the Women and Child Protection Wing of the CCB.

The investigation has already resulted in the arrest of Pallavi, who is currently in judicial custody. The couple's daughter, Kriti, is now under the CCB's radar and will be taken in for detailed questioning. Investigators believe her statements could shed further light on the motive and planning behind the murder. *—Salar News*

CASTE CENSUS

Vokkaligas, Veerashaivas ally against survey

BENGALURU, 24 APRIL

Alarmed by the possible implementation of the caste census report recommendations, the Karnataka Rajya Vokkaligara Sangha, an apex body of the dominant Vokkaliga (agrarian) community, is seeking an alliance with the Veerashaiva Mahasabha.

The unusual coalition aims to counter any attempt to impose the caste census recommendations in the state. "We are in constant touch with Veerashaiva Mahasabha leaders. We are planning to hold a meeting, but the date has not been finalised yet," Vokkaligara Sangha president Kenchappa Gowda told PTI.

A Veerashaiva Mahasabha office-bearer also confirmed ongoing discussions between leaders of both communities. "The talks are mainly to decide strategies to build pressure on the government not to proceed with the caste census report recommendations and to demand a fresh, free, and fair survey," the office-bearer said, requesting anonymity.

The Vokkaligara Sangha and Veerashaiva-Lingayat communities, Karnataka's two dominant castes have opposed the 'Social and Educational Survey Report,' commonly referred to as the caste census, which was presented to the Karnataka cabinet on April 11, 10 years after it was commissioned. A week after it was tabled, the state government in a special cabinet meeting on 17 April, decided to discuss the report again at the cabinet meeting on 2 May.

The report was submitted to the state government in February last year by Jayaprakash Hegde, chairperson of the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission *—PTI*

Veerashaiva Mahasabha office-bearer also confirmed ongoing discussions between leaders of both communities **PHOTO: PTI**

AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan along with senior Congress leaders welcomed several BJP and JD(S) workers who officially joined the party at the KPCC office on Thursday in Bengaluru **PHOTO: SALAR**

Pakistanis flock to Wagah border to reach home

India has given them a 48-hour deadline to leave the country

CHANDIGARH, 24 APRIL

BSF personnel at Integrated Check Post after the government of India decides to close the ICP Attari with immediate effect, in Amritsar on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

Several Pakistani nationals visiting India began their journey home through the Attari-Wagah land route in Amritsar on Thursday, after the Centre set a 48-hour deadline for them to leave the country.

According to Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, Pakistani nationals will not be permitted to travel to India under the SAARC visa exemption scheme (SVES) and any Pakistani national currently in India under the SVES visa scheme had 48 hours to leave the country.

The decisions were taken by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which announced that the integrated check-post (ICP) at Attari will be closed with immediate effect and those who crossed over to Pakistan with valid documents must return through that route before 1 May.

On Thursday morning, several Pakistani families reached the ICP in Amritsar to return to the neighbouring country through the Attari-Wagah land route.

A family from Karachi said they had gone to Delhi to meet their relatives.

"We came here (India) on 15 April and today we are returning home even though we had a visa for 45 days," said Shaikh Fazal Ahmad.

Responding to a question on the Pahalgam attack, Ahmad said, "Whosoever has done it is completely wrong. We want mutual brotherhood and friendship between the two nations. There should be no place for hatred. We don't want hatred."

Another Pakistani national named Mansoor said he along with his family came to India on a 90-day visa also on 15 April. "But we are returning home today,"

Another Pakistani national, Mustafa, said it was not right to ask all Pakistanis to leave India.

Similarly, some Indian nationals with visas to travel to Pakistan also reached the ICP on Thursday, including a family from Gujarat intending to meet their relatives in Karachi.

"We got the visa two months back," said an elderly member.

Kanpur resident Seema said she needed to visit Karachi to meet her ailing sister.

"I want to go to Karachi. I have a visa for one month. My sister Chanda Aftab is in a very serious state," Seema said.

When told about the closure of the land-transit post, she said, "What can I say?" *—PTI*

Ranjan left for Kashmir with a smile. He would call us every day on the phone and WhatsApp to ask about our health. We even received his call on the fateful day

-Manglesh Kumar, father of slain Manish Ranjan, IB officer

My world has come crashing down. Who will look after my three-year-old son? He asks where Papa is and says 'fire, fire'

-Sohini Adhikari, wife of Bitan Adhikari

We crawled under the fence to escape. People scattered in all directions. As we were moving, a man emerged from the woods. He looked straight at us. My sons started screaming, and the man walked off. I knew my father was gone

-Arathi R Menon, daughter of N Ramachandran

Kashmir is not bad, but the security there is bad. The terrorist was laughing after shooting my husband and did not leave till he died. Neither police nor the army was present there.

- Shitalben Kalathiya, wife of Surat banker Shailesh Kalathiya

RUSSIAN REPORT

Mossad claims RaGa, Hindenburg set up Adani

BENGALURU, 24 APRIL

Israel's intelligence agency Mossad carried out a covert operation called 'Operation Zepellin' targeting the home servers of Sam Pitroda, head of the Indian Overseas Congress (IOC) and a close aide of Congress MP Rahul Gandhi.

According to the report by Sputnik India, which is a Russian state-owned news agency, Mossad sought evidence to prove link between the Opposition and Hindenburg Research, IANS reported.

Hindenburg is the US firm whose January 2023 report alleged stock manipulation and major fraud at the Adani Group. Hindenburg Research shut down on 15 January, 2025.

The operation was allegedly ordered by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was worried over the timing of the Hindenburg report, which surfaced days before Adani Ports was set to finalise a $1.2 billion deal to acquire a majority stake in Israel's Haifa Port.

Netanyahu feared the timing of the report could jepordise a key pillar of the Israel-India relations.

Sputnik India claims the operation "exposed encrypted chatrooms and undisclosed backchannels of communication," revealing links "between Rahul Gandhi and the Hindenburg Research team".

Mossad also reportedly tracked Rahul Gandhi's travel and meetings, including one in Palo Alto where he reportedly met people connected with Hindenburg.

This was reportedly to undermine both Gautam Adani and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In January 2023, Hindenburg Research accused Adani Group of inflating its stock prices via offshore shell companies and accounting malpractices.

Gautam Adani's group denied all these allegations.

Salar News could not independently verify these claims made by Sputnik India. *—Agencies*

Police arrest 4 LeT workers in J&K

BANDIPORA, 24 APRIL

- Bandipora police arrested five LeT workers who admitted to being tasked with attacking police, security forces and non-locals in Naidkhai Sumbal

Bandipora police in Jammu and Kashmir arrested four overground workers and claimed to have busted a module of terrorist outfit Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT).

Bandipora police received information about some overground workers affiliated with LeT hatching a criminal conspiracy to launch and attack. Police launched a manhunt and established special nakas at different places in the district in collaboration with Central Reserve Police Force and Rashtriya Rifles.

During a naka checking at Kanipora Naidkhai Sumbal, the police apprehended Mohammad Rafiq Khanday, a resident of Khanday Mohalla Watalpira, Banyarai, and Mukhtar Ahmad, a resident of Bunpora Mohalla K Bala.

During another checking at Sadunara Ajas, two more suspects: Rayees Ahmad Dar, a resident of SaderkootBala and MohdShafi Dar, a resident of Banyari were apprehended.

Illegal arms comprising of three Chinese hand grenades, two 7.62 MM magazines and 60 rounds of 7.62mm were recovered from their possession.

During questioning, the accused admitted to being LeT overground workers, tasked with targetting police, security forces and non-locals in Naidkhai Sumbal and adjacent areas. *—PTI*

US updates travel advisory after terror attack

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 24 APRIL

The US has issued an updated advisory after the Pahalgam terror attack asking Americans not to travel to Jammu and Kashmir and within 10 kilometres of the India-Pakistan border.

The update was issued on 23 April, a day after terrorists opened fire in Pahalgam, killing 26 people, mostly tourists, in the deadliest attack in the valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019.

"Terrorist attacks and violent civil unrest are possible in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Do not travel to this state (with the exception of visits to the eastern Ladakh region and its capital, Leh)."

"Violence happens sporadically in this area and is common along the Line of Control between India and Pakistan. It also occurs in tourist spots in the Kashmir Valley: Srinagar, Gulmarg, and Pahalgam," the US Department of State's updated travel advisory said.

Citizens were also asked to avoid going within 10 kilometres of the India-Pakistan border due to possible armed conflict.

India has suspended the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 and announced downgrading diplomatic ties with Pakistan, including expulsion of its military attaches, in view of the cross-border links to the Pahalgam terror attack. *—PTI*

2 held in UP over 'objectionable' Instagram post

BULANDSHAHR, 24 APRIL

Two youths were arrested on Thursday for allegedly posting objectionable content on social media platform Instagram in connection with the terrorist attack, in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr.

Speaking to PTI, Bulandshahr Rural Superintendent of Police Tejveer Singh said the post was deemed "insensitive and inflammatory" by some locals. *—PTI*

Nine-year-old boy lights father's funeral pyre in Odisha

9-year-old Odisha boy lights funeral pyre of father Prashant, who was shot dead in front of him **PHOTO: ANI**

BALASORE, 24 APRIL

A heart-wrenching scene unfolded in Ishani village, Odisha, as nine-year-old Tanuj Kumar Satpathy lit the funeral pyre of his father, Prashant, who was killed in a terror attack in Pahalgam.

Prashant, 41, an employee of the Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology, had travelled to Pahalgam for a family vacation with his wife Priya Darshini and son Tanuj.

As relatives struggled to take Prashant's body to the crematorium, Priya clung to her husband's lifeless form, fainting from grief before finally allowing the procession to proceed. Hundreds gathered to pay their respects, including Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena.

Majhi vowed that the state would provide ex-gratia of Rs 20 lakh, a job for Priya, and ensure Tanuj's educational needs are met. *—PTI*

Markets shut in Punjab; Thane mourns too

HOSHIARPUR/THANE, 24 APRIL

Markets and commercial establishments in Punjab's Hoshiarpur and Kapurthala districts observed a complete shutdown on Thursday, in protest against the recent terror attack in Pahalgam.

The bandh was called by several Hindu organisations, with widespread participation from local shopkeepers and traders. In Hoshiarpur, the protest was spearheaded by Mohan Lal 'Lucky' Thakur, state secretary of the Rashtriya Rajput Karni Sena.

Demonstrators marched through various markets, raising slogans against what they described as Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and cross-border violence.

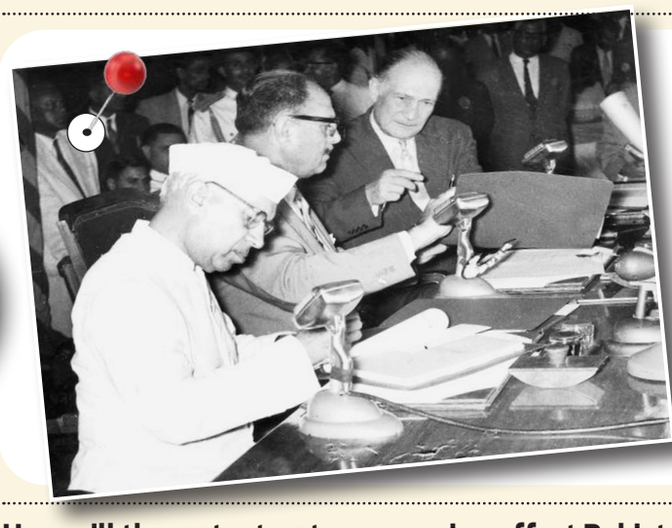
Meanwhile, residents of Dombivli, Maharashtra, came together on Thursday to observe a spontaneous bandh. The town, usually bustling with activity, appeared deserted.

Three residents of the town were killed in the attack. *—PTI*

INDUS WATER TREATY

What is the Treaty?

The Indus Water Treaty was signed in 1960, with the World Bank serving as a broker. It divided the six rivers of the Indus Basin: India received the three eastern rivers - the Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej while Pakistan received the three western rivers - the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab. India retains the right to use the western rivers for non-consumptive purposes like hydropower, and for limited irrigation, but is not allowed to store or divert their flows in ways that harm downstream access.



Then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistani President Ayub Khan sign a treaty in 1960 for the distribution of the Indus Basin waters, ending a 13 year-old dispute between India and Pakistan.

How will the water treaty suspension affect Pakistan?

Pakistan receives around 80% of its water from the Indus and its tributaries. 93% of this is used for irrigation. Major urban centres like Karachi, Lahore and Multan draw water from the rivers while Pakistan's hydropower plants like Tarbela and Mangla also depend on its uninterrupted flows. The system supports over 237 million people, with Pakistan accounting for 61% of the Indus Basin population.

Centre says Art 370 abrogation brought peace, but J&K saw deaths

463 lives lost since 2019

Civilians	Security forces
2019: 42	2019: 78
2020: 33	2020: 56
2021: 36	2021: 45
2022: 30	2022: 30
2023: 12	2023: 33
2024: 31	2024: 26
2025: 27	2025: 8
Total: 211	Total: 252

Abrogation of Article 370 is a watershed moment

Narendra Modi, Indian Prime Minister in 2024

Previous attacks by TRF

TRFs previous attacks were comparatively minor and were mainly targeted killings. They named Kashmiri journalists on a "traitor hit list" for allegedly colluding with the Indian government. At least five of the named journalists quickly resigned. In June 2024, TRF claimed responsibility for an attack on a bus carrying Hindu pilgrims, killing at least nine people and injuring 33, in Jammu's Reasi area. The bus had plunged into a gorge during the attack.

Pahalgam attackers TRF, who are they?

The Resistance Front (TRF) is an offshoot of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). They were founded in 2019, shortly after the abrogation of Article 370. Muhammad Abbas Sheikh, associated with Hizbul Mujahideen was one of the key founders along with Sheikh Sajjad Gul. Abbas was killed in 2022. It is currently led by Sajjad Gul, Sajid Jatt, and Salim Rehmani.
TRF is believed to be backed by Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI and are known to recruit cadres online. They were banned in 2023 under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)and are known for filming their attacks with body-cams and to post on social handles in order to motivate recruits. Unlike many other similar organisations, the TRF does not have an Islamic name. It was created to give Kashmiri militancy a more "local and secular" face. This branding is reportedly a tactic to evade scrutiny from international watchdogs.

Sketches of the suspects Adil Hussain Thoker, Ali Bhai, Hashim Musa

RESEARCH: SIDDHARTH SALDANHA; DESIGN: SURENDHAR R

Manipur shutdown on Friday over 'custodial death'

IMPHAL, 24 APRIL

A Joint Action Committee (JAC) formed in connection with the alleged custodial death of a 27-year-old man named a 24-hour bandh in Manipur on Thursday. Khoisnam Sanajaoba was arrested in Imphal East district on March 31 along with four others for their alleged association with the proscribed outfit Kangleipak Communist Party. The JAC said it submitted a memorandum to the governor, seeking an investigation into the "custodial death" of Sanajaoba on April 17. The JAC said Khoisnam was a "village volunteer" who was sent to Manipur Central Jail at Sajiwa on 10 April and was admitted to Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences on 13 April, where he was pronounced dead. Protests were held at various parts of the Khurai constituency in Imphal East district in connection with the death. *—PTI*

Madras HC directs special court to book TN minister

CHENNAI, 24 APRIL

The Madras High Court on Thursday overturned a lower court's decision to discharge senior DMK leader and Tamil Nadu Minister Duraimurugan and his wife in a disproportionate assets case. The court directed a special court in Vellore to frame charges related to wealth allegedly acquired unlawfully between 2007 and 2009, during his term as Public Works Minister in the 2006–11 DMK government. The Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption filed the case in 2011, alleging unexplained assets worth Rs 1.4 crore. A Vellore court had discharged the couple in 2017, a ruling now set aside by Justice P Velmurugan. This is the second such case involving Duraimurugan in two days. The High Court instructed the special court to conduct the trial on a day-to-day basis and conclude proceedings within six months. *—PTI*

Tripura man holds wife's marriage to her lover

AGARTALA, 24 APRIL

A 33-year-old man from Birchandramanu in South Tripura arranged for his wife to marry her long-time lover, with whom she had reportedly been in a relationship for eight years. Nayan Saha, a driver, married Jhuma Saha, 27, eight years ago, but she soon began an affair with their neighbour, Dipankar Banik. Despite warnings, the affair continued, leading to tension. On 21 April, Nayan allegedly caught the pair together. The next day, he arranged their wedding at a local temple, with the consent of all involved and in front of villagers. Jhuma, now living with Dipankar, has taken her two sons. Both Nayan and Jhuma have filed for divorce and plan to register the new marriage once it is finalised. Police have not taken legal action, calling it a consensual arrangement. *—PTI*

Delhi HC orders attachment of TMC MP Gakhale's pay

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

The Delhi High Court has ordered the attachment of TMC MP Saket Gokhale's salary in a defamation case filed by former UN diplomat Lakshmi Puri. Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora noted that Gokhale failed to apologise or pay Rs 50 lakh in damages, as directed in a 1 July 2024 judgment. The court stated his Rs 1.90 lakh salary would remain attached until the full amount is recovered, as per Section 60 of the Civil Procedure Code, which allows partial salary attachment in decree executions. Puri had sued Gokhale in 2021 for allegedly making false and defamatory statements about her finances concerning a Geneva apartment. The court also restrained him from posting further comments about her. Gokhale's plea to recall the judgment is pending, but no stay has been granted. *—PTI*

TN bans production, storage and sale of mayonnaise

Ban is for 1 year, owing to fear of the high food poisoning risk

CHENNAI, 24 APRIL

The Tamil Nadu government has prohibited the manufacturing, packaging and selling of mayonnaise prepared from raw egg throughout the state for a year owing to its 'high risk' of food poisoning.

The ban, which came into effect from 8 April, was notified under section 30 (2) (a) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (Central Act 34 of 2006).

"It has come to the notice that number of food business operators use raw egg for preparation of mayonnaise, improper preparation and storage facilitates contamination by microorganisms which creates public health risk particularly by Salmonella typhimurium, Salmonella enteritidis, Escherichia coli and Listeria monocytogenes," a gazette notification issued by R Lalvena, Principal Secretary and Commissioner of Food Safety, said.

- The Commissioner of Food Safety, Tamil Nadu, prohibited the manufacture, storage, distribution or sale of mayonnaise prepared from raw egg in the whole of Tamil Nadu state

In an exercise of the powers conferred by clauses under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, the Commissioner of Food Safety, Tamil Nadu, prohibits the manufacture, storage, distribution or sale of Mayonnaise prepared from raw egg in the whole of Tamil Nadu state for a period of one year with effect from 8 April, in the interest of public health, the notification stated.

Mayonnaise is a semi solid emulsion generally composed of egg yolk, vegetable oil, vinegar and other seasonings served along with food items like shawarma. *—PTI*

Another actress accuses Tom Chacko of sexual misconduct

KOCHI, 24 APRIL

Actor Shine Tom Chacko has come under renewed scrutiny following allegations of inappropriate behaviour from another co-star on the set of the upcoming Malayalam film 'Soothravakyam.' Actress Aparna John, currently in Australia, stated in an interview that her experiences echoed those of her fellow cast member, Vincy Aloshious, who had earlier accused Chacko of misbehaving under the influence of drugs.

John confirmed Aloshious's claims, asserting that Chacko displayed erratic behaviour and made highly inappropriate remarks with "strong sexual connotations." She described his conduct as "verbal diarrhoea," stating, "He was restless and constantly moving, and if any woman was present, his comments were explicit." Concerned for her comfort, John reported Chacko's behaviour to a member of the Internal Complaints Committee on set, which led to her scenes being completed ahead of schedule.

Aloshious had previously lodged a complaint with the Film Chamber regarding Chacko's conduct and informed the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) about the incidents, although no police complaint has been filed. Chacko, who was arrested earlier in a drug-related case, has since been released on bail. The Kerala government has stated it takes the allegations seriously and is actively investigating the matter. *—PTI*

Woman raped in front of daughter at farmhouse

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

A 37-year-old caretaker at a farmhouse has reported being raped by a neighbour in front of her daughter in the Swaroop Nagar area of north Delhi. The accused, Dharminder, 35, from Muzaffarpur in Bihar, was arrested on Wednesday.

Police said Dharminder bound the hands and feet of the woman and her 11-year-old daughter before the assault. The incident reportedly occurred between in the night of 20 April, while the duo was sleeping on the veranda of their farmhouse in Kadipur, police said. *—PTI*

Three Naxals killed in Chhattisgarh

RAIPUR, 24 APRIL

In a significant anti-Naxalite operation along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border, three Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces on Thursday. The gunfight happened in the Karegutta hills of Bijapur district during a joint operation involving approximately 10,000 personnel from various units, including the District Reserve Guard, Bastar Fighters, Special Task Force, CRPF, and the Telangana police.

The operation is targeted at dismantling the Maoists' Battalion No. 1, known for its formidable strength.

The operation is targeted at dismantling the Maoists' Battalion No. 1, known for its formidable strength **PHOTO: PTI**

In a separate development, a special anti-terror court sentenced three men to seven years of rigorous imprisonment for supplying explosives to Naxals in Chhattisgarh. The convicted individuals, identified as Semal Deepak, Nara Bhaskar, and Telam Mutta, were arrested in 2023 after police recovered electronic detonators, cordtex wires, and gelatin from them. The National Investigation Agency, which took over the case from state police, established their connections with active Maoist cadres. Alongside their prison sentences, they were also fined for their roles in supporting the banned CPI (Maoist) terrorist organisation. Both incidents highlight ongoing efforts to combat Maoist activities in the region. *—PTI*

NEET aspirant found dead in Kota, suicide suspected

KOTA, 24 APRIL

Authorities have reported the tragic discovery of a 23-year-old NEET aspirant from Delhi, whose body was found near railway tracks in the Landmark City area early Thursday morning. Initial investigations suggest that Roshan Sharma died by suicide, allegedly by consuming poison, though no suicide note was recovered from the scene.

This incident marks the second suspected suicide involving a NEET aspirant within 48 hours, and the twelfth case reported since January in the coaching hub of Kota. Sharma, a resident of Tughlakabad in Delhi, was last in contact with his family on Wednesday night, during which he expressed his intentions not to sit for the NEET examination scheduled for next month, stating he would rather end his life.

According to police, his parents had travelled to Kota recently to persuade him to return home, but he refused, leading them to take away his belongings.

The body was discovered by passersby, who alerted the authorities. The deceased's remains are currently housed at the mortuary of MBS Hospital, pending a post-mortem examination following the arrival of his family from Delhi.

On Tuesday, an 18-year-old NEET aspirant from Chhapra in Bihar was found dead in his hostel room. *—PTI*

Heatwave alerts issued for Odisha, Jharkhand

BHUBANESWAR/RANCHI, 24 APRIL

A heatwave alert has been issued for parts of Odisha and Jharkhand as temperatures soar above 40 degrees Celsius in several areas. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has placed Odisha under an 'Orange' alert for the districts of Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Sonepur, Boudh, Bolangir, and Bargarh, advising residents to prepare for extreme heat. A 'Yellow' alert was issued for Kalahandi, Nupada, Deogarh, and Angul districts, with hot and humid conditions expected to persist.

In Jharkhand, Daltonganj recorded the highest temperature in the state at 43 degrees Celsius, prompting a 'Yellow' alert across Simdega, Saraikela-Kharswan, and East and West Singhbhum districts. Ranchi Meteorological Centre predicts maximum temperatures will remain around 40 degrees Celsius for at least three days, before potentially declining with rain forecasted for later in the week.

The IMD has advised individuals in both states to keep hydrated, avoid prolonged sun exposure, and cover their heads when outdoors. It is also recommended to keep livestock in shaded areas and ensure they have access to drinking water. *—PTI*

AHEAD IN ASIA-PACIFIC

5 Indian cities show positive change in LGBTQ+ inclusion

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

India's major urban centres have made moderate yet promising progress in LGBTQ+ inclusion, the Open for Business City Ratings 2025 said.

Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad have all earned a "C" rating, categorising them as "partially open for business". The rating places them ahead of many other cities in the Asia-Pacific region, even as national policies remain "sluggish" in advancing LGBTQ+ rights.

The report claimed that India's strides have been largely propelled by several proactive state-level initiatives and private sector leadership.

Landmark judicial decisions -- such as the Supreme Court's mandate for separate restrooms for transgender individuals in courts and the Madras High Court's 2025 ruling that "homosexuality is not a disorder" -- have set the tone for greater inclusion, the report noted.

Other notable steps include Tamil Nadu's 2022 directive curbing police harassment of LGBTQ+ individuals and the Education Equality Index launched in 2024.

Despite this progress, national-level actions lagged behind. The Supreme Court's 2023 ruling against legalising same-sex marriages was a setback, the report said as it underlined that broader legal recognition and protection remain areas of concern.

A Deloitte survey cited in the report found that Indian workplaces outperformed global averages in terms of LGBTQ+ employees' comfort in disclosing their identities.

India's therefore case underscores that cities can lead the way on inclusion even when national governments move slowly.

City Ratings 2025 benchmarks 149 cities globally based on LGBTQ+ inclusion and economic competitiveness. It draws on 27 metrics sourced from internationally recognised data partners, including Oxford Economics, to evaluate cities.

The report combined indicators on innovation, human capital, legal protection, and social attitudes to assess how open a city truly is for business. *—PTI*

DANCER IN DESHMUKH'S FILM DROWNS, FOUND AFTER 2 DAYS

MUMBAI, 24 APRIL

A 26-year-old dancer, part of the choreography team for actor-director Riteish Deshmukh's film 'Raja Shivaji', tragically drowned in the Krishna River in Maharashtra's Satara district, shortly after completing a song shoot. The deceased, identified as Saurabh Sharma, went missing on Tuesday evening at Sangam Mahuli, a village at the confluence of the Krishna and Venna rivers, about 250km from Mumbai.

Saurabh Sharma

After filming, Sharma went to wash his hands in the river and then entered the deep water for a swim, but was swept away by strong currents. Despite a search operation that began the same evening and continued the following day, Sharma's body was found on Thursday morning. An accidental death case has been filed, and the investigation is ongoing. 'Raja Shivaji' is a bilingual film about Maratha warrior Chha trapati Shivaji Maharaj. *—PTI*

ON THE FAST TRACK

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar flag-off India's first 16-coach Namo Bharat Rapid Rail on Thursday. Modi also announced Rs 13,480-crore worth of projects in Bihar **PHOTO: PTI**

SC allows UGC to notify draft regulations on ragging

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Thursday allowed the University Grants Commission (UGC) to notify the draft regulations 2025, which deal with ragging, sexual harassment and discrimination on the basis of caste, gender, disability, and other biases in higher education.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh took note of an earlier verdict, which constituted a national task force (NTF) to address the mental health concerns of students to prevent suicides in colleges.

The bench was hearing a PIL, which said pending the NTF's recommendations and consideration by the top court, the petitioners or any other public spirited person should be at liberty to move an appropriate plea in the pending proceedings to suggest suitable addition or deletion in the UGC regulations.

The top court said such suggestions will be considered. Senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing for the mothers of students Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi, who allegedly committed suicide after facing caste-based discrimination, said the UGC had merged the guidelines for sexual harassments, ragging and discrimination. If the proposed regulations were enacted, the NTF could examine them and make its own recommendations in case of shortcomings. *—PTI*

WINDOW TO IRON-AGE

3,000-yr-old civilisation unearthed in M'rashtra

YAVATMAL, 24 APRIL

Researchers from the Nagpur University claimed to have found remains of a nearly 3,000-year-old civilisation along with its houses in Maharashtra's Yavatmal district. They believe it dates back to the Iron Age.

The team found the around 8.73 metres of cultural deposits during an excavation last year in a mound outside Pachked village in Babulgaon taluka.

"We divided these deposits into four periods...period one-Iron Age, which was divided into sub periods. The cultural sequence of the findings starts with the Iron Age on the basis of pottery and artefact remains found. It was followed by the Satavahana period, the Medieval period, and then it (the location which has been found) was used as a watch tower during the Nizam era," Head of Nagpur University's Department of Ancient Indian History Dr Prabash Sahu said.

The research team found structural remains of circular houses with limestone floors and wooden posts at their periphery, Sahu said. "We found a complete house plan having a chulha (mud stove), pottery, iron objects, beads of semi-precious stones, terracotta beads and bone objects," he said. These findings are most probably from the Iron Age about 3,000 years old, Sahu claimed.

The samples have been sent to the Inter University Accelerator Centre, New Delhi, which carries out AMS dating, to ascertain the time period to which they belong, and it will be known by May-June this year, he said. *—PTI*

Remains of a nearly 3,000-year-old civilisation found in the Yavatmal district of Maharashtra **PHOTO: PTI**

MORE THAN DEATH?

Five white-rumped vultures were released in Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district on Thursday as part of the ambitious 'Jatayu Conservation Project'. There are currently less than 6,000 white-rumped vultures in the world. The population declined by more than 99 per cent in three generations, dying of diclofenac poisoning contracted from feeding on animal carcasses which were treated with veterinary drugs. The project is an ambitious move to reintroduce and re-establish this critically endangered species. ***PHOTO: PTI***

India has many options with the Indus Treaty suspension

India said the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) of 1960 with Pakistan will be held in abeyance with immediate effect, until Islamabad credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism.

What could be the impact of this move?

The Indus system of rivers comprises the main river -- the Indus -- along with its five left bank tributaries, namely, the Ravi, the Beas, the Sutlej, the Jhelum and the Chenab. The right bank tributary, the Kabul, does not flow through India.

The Ravi, the Beas and the Sutlej are eastern rivers while the Chenab, the Jhelum and the Indus main are western rivers. Its waters are critical to both India and Pakistan.

Pradeep Kumar Saxena, who served as India's Indus Water Commissioner for over six years said India, as an upper riparian country, has multiple options.

"This could be the first step towards the abrogation of the treaty, if the government so decides," Saxena told PTI.

"Although there is no explicit provision in the treaty for its abrogation, Article 62 of the Vienna Convention on Law of the Treaties provides sufficient room under which the treaty can be repudiated in view of the fundamental change of circumstances which has occurred with regard to those existing at the time of conclusion of the treaty," he said.

Listing out the steps India could take, Saxena said in the absence of the treaty, India is under no obligation to follow the restrictions on the "reservoir flushing" of the Kishanganga reservoir and other projects on western rivers in Jammu and Kashmir. The Indus Water Treaty currently prohibits it.

Flushing can help India desilt its reservoir but then filling the entire reservoir could take days. Under the treaty, reservoir filling after the flushing has to be done in August -- peak monsoon period -- but with the pact in abeyance, it could be done anytime.

India can now flush the Kishanganga reservoir now at any time, which could be detrimental to Pakistan's Punjab which largely depends on the Indus and its tributaries ***PHOTO: ANI***

Doing it when sowing season begins in Pakistan could be detrimental, especially when a large part of Punjab in Pakistan depends on the Indus and its tributaries.

According to the treaty, there are design restrictions on building structures like dams on Indus and its tributaries.

In the past, Pakistan has raised objections over the designs but in future that may not be the case. But the objections may no longer be applicable for the new projects.

Last year, India sent a formal notice to Pakistan, seeking the "review and modification" of the treaty.

In the past almost every project has been objected to by Pakistan. The objections may no longer be applicable for the new projects.

Notable are Salal, Baglihar, Uri, Chutak, Nimoo Bazgo, Kishenganga, Pakal Dul, Miyar, Lower Kalnai and Ratle. After the Pulwama terror attack in 2019, the government cleared eight more hydropower projects in Ladakh.

Saxena said India can stop sharing flood data on the rivers. This could also prove detrimental to Pakistan, especially during the monsoon when rivers swell.

India will now have no restriction on storage on western rivers, particularly the Jhelum, and the country can take a number of flood control measures to mitigate floods in the Valley, he said.

At the time of Independence, the boundary line between the two newly created countries was drawn right across the Indus Basin, leaving Pakistan as the lower riparian and India as the upper riparian.

Two important irrigation works, one at Madhopur on the Ravi river and the other at Ferozepur on the Sutlej river, on which the irrigation canal supplies in Punjab (Pakistan) had been completely dependent, fell in the Indian territory.

A dispute thus arose regarding the utilisation of irrigation water. Negotiations held under the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) resulted in the Indus Water Treaty in 1960.

According to the treaty, all the waters of the eastern rivers with an average annual flow of around 33 million acre feet (MAF) is allocated to India for unrestricted use while the waters of western rivers with average annual flow of around 135 MAF is allocated largely to Pakistan.

However, India is permitted to use the waters of the western rivers for domestic use, non-consumptive use, agricultural and generation of hydro-electric power. The right to generate hydroelectricity from western rivers is unrestricted subject to conditions for the design and operation of the treaty. India can also create storages up to 3.6 MAF on western rivers, the pact states. *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

'Where is papa?' A question echoes after the J&K attack

> They asked where we were from, then segregated the men, asked their religion, and shot them one by one. My husband was murdered right in front of our child.
>
> -Sohini Adhikari
>
> Kindly divide it, and give an amount to. Bitan Adhikari's parents also. They are totally helpless. After (a child's) death, the parents became more helpless.
>
> -Kunal Ghosh, TMC Leader

- Bitan Adhikari's 3 year old son cries, asking where his father is, after a joyful family vacation turned into nightmare. His widow, Sohini, doesn't have the heart to tell him

Each time her little boy wakes up from sleep, his voice trembles with the same haunting questions— "Where is papa? Did he go somewhere?"

His mother, Sohini, has no answers. All she can offer are tears as her son's words slice through the stillness like shattered glass.

The three-and-half-year-old kid's father Bitan Adhikari was gunned down by terrorists amidst the breathtaking beauty of Pahalgam, Kashmir.

What was meant to be a joyful family holiday turned into a lifelong nightmare.

Adhikari, originally from West Bengal, had settled in Florida with his family a few years ago.

He returned to Kolkata on 8 April to visit relatives and was vacationing in Kashmir with his family at the time of the attack.

"They separated us," his widow recounted to a news channel, her voice cracking.

"They asked where we were from, then segregated the men, asked their religion, and shot them one by one. My husband was murdered right in front of our child." she said "How do I explain this to him?"

"I don't know how to tell my son that his father is gone forever," she says, her voice barely a whisper.

"He wakes in terror, clutching my hand, pleading—'Where is father?'"

Back home in Kolkata, the grief runs deeper still.

Bitan was not only a devoted husband and father, but also the primary caregiver for his ageing and ailing parents, despite living abroad.

His father, 87-year-old Bireshwar Adhikari, and his 75-year-old mother, Maya Adhikari, are both in poor health.

It was Bitan who managed their medical expenses, sending money from abroad to ensure they never missed a dose of medicine or a doctor's appointment.

"He may have been overseas, but he never let us feel his absence," said a grieving relative.

"From arranging their checkups to paying for every prescription, Bitan handled everything. Now, who will look after them?"

The 22 April attack claimed the lives of 25 Indian tourists and one Nepali national, leaving scores of others wounded.

The savage nature of the killings, allegedly after terrorists separated non-Kashmiri tourists and asked them about their religion, has sparked national outrage.

Back in Kolkata, as neighbours and relatives try to console the Adhikari family, the pain remains too deep for words.

"I just want someone to tell my son why his father is never coming back. And I want justice — not just for my husband, but for every innocent person who lost their life that day," his wife said.

Adding to the family's call for justice, Trinamool Congress leader Kunal Ghosh made a public appeal on social media urging both the central and state governments to consider the plight of Bitan's parents while disbursing compensation.

"Don't give the entire compensation amount to Mrs. Adhikari alone," Ghosh posted on X.

"Kindly divide it, and give an amount to Mr. Bitan Adhikari's parents also. They are totally helpless. After Bitan's death, the parents became more helpless. A financial protection must be given to them also," he said.

He further emphasised that if the elderly parents were no longer alive, the amount would naturally revert to Bitan's wife and son.

But at this moment, the situation of the parents warranted immediate, independent attention.

"I am confident the state government will consider this point seriously," he said.

"The central government should think alike also," he added, hoping that his suggestions would help bring a policy change. *—PTI*

Sohini Adhikari, wife of Bitan Adhikari who was killed in the Pahalgam terror attack ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

How do Indians navigate WhatsApp fake news and misinformation?

WhatsApp group chats in India often turn into forums for political debate, with misinformation running rampant. And touchy topics can cause rifts between friends and family.

Nidhi, a 26-year-old from India's capital, New Delhi, was once very close to her uncle. But after he started forwarding anti-Muslim messages containing misinformation in their family's group chat, their relationship soured.

They always got into healthy political debates during family dinners, but his posts on WhatsApp were becoming "intolerable," she said.

"He would forward what was clearly false information, twisted historical facts to fit a certain kind of propaganda," she told DW.

Nidhi said her uncle never showed any open hate toward Muslims, but on WhatsApp, it was a different story.

"Some of us would call him out for it and fact-check him. But that seemed to make no difference. He once sent a message calling people from the Muslim community 'infiltrators' and that was it for me."

Nidhi said she exited the family group chat and has not reconciled with her uncle since.

"He was someone I respected a lot, but it's difficult to do that now," she said.

India is WhatsApp's largest market. The messaging application has over 530 million users in the country, making it one of the most popular social media platforms across age groups.

WhatsApp is a leading platform for news and information in India. However, it is also becoming a medium for misinformation.

"WhatsApp University," for instance, has become a buzzword in colloquial Indian vocabulary in recent years, referring sarcastically to the widespread dissemination of misinformation and fake news on the platform.

"There is a lot of information or misinformation, which is being put out through WhatsApp. Information is education. Where you get information from, makes your world view," Pratik Sinha, co-founder of India fact-checking website Alt News, told DW.

"If your information ecosystem is completely corrupt" then that information is not going to reflect a "real world view," he added.

When looking at India, types of misinformation range from politics and history, to science and medicine.

"A lot of political misinformation or sociopolitical misinformation is aimed at creating divisions, aimed at vilifying the Muslim community. It has led to deep polarization in the society. It has led to attacks on minorities," Sinha added.

The misinformation crisis on WhatsApp groups in India first came to the fore in 2018 when child abduction rumors circulating on the platform led to over a dozen people being killed in mob lynchings ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

The misinformation crisis on WhatsApp groups in India first came to the fore in 2018 when child abduction rumors circulating on the platform led to over a dozen people being killed in mob lynchings.

There was also a wave of disinformation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Fake news was also spread during elections. Meanwhile, artificial intelligence and deepfakes made matters worse.

WhatsApp has said it is tackling misinformation through a multipronged approach. This includes constraining viral sharing by limiting forwards, building a network of fact checkers in India and running user awareness campaigns to educate people on how to identify and stop the spread of misinformation.

"WhatsApp is the only messaging service that has intentionally constrained viral sharing on our service by limiting forwards," a WhatsApp spokesperson told DW. "WhatsApp labels messages that have been 'forwarded' and 'forwarded many times' so you know it has not come from a close contact. Our limits imposed on 'forwards' have reduced the spread of 'highly forwarded messages' by over 70 per cent. In 2022, we added new limits, where messages that have the "forwarded label" can only be forwarded to one group at a time, rather than five."

The statement also said that a fact-checking tip line on WhatsApp has been launched in partnership with The Misinformation Combat Alliance in a bid to fight the spread of AI-generated misinformation in India.

Some analysts stress that WhatsApp is a tricky space for content moderation because of its end-to-end encryption, where a difficult balance emerges between privacy and the harms caused by misinformation.

"WhatsApp's hands are a bit tied. Any sort of moderation could be misused and overused in a direction towards compromising privacy and breaking encryption. That's not something they want to do," Kiran Garimella, an assistant professor at the School of Communication and Information at Rutgers University in New Jersey, said.

Garimella also warned against the risk of governments seeking to break encryption.

"Encryption is great. We should all accept that. One thing to be wary of is that we don't want the wrong actors, let's say the government, to misconstrue this and say that there's a lot of misinformation on WhatsApp and that's why you should break encryption," he added.

Fact checker Sinha believes that misinformation is a larger social problem that warrants a long-term solution.

"The world was not made where 6 billion people can talk to each other. That creates a different problem altogether and to deal with that problem you need some very serious measures," he said.

"Our educational system has to have a component of how to look at information critically. The issue starts at the very top. None of the political parties are interested in combating misinformation," he added. *—DW news*

China sends three astronauts to space station

BEIJING, 24 APRIL

China successfully launched three astronauts aboard the Shenzhou-20 spacecraft on Thursday to replace the current crew manning its Tiangong space station.. The mission lifted off 5.17pm local time from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre coinciding with its 10th space day, marking the 35th flight of China's manned space programme and the 5th crewed mission of the station's development phase. The new astronauts will conduct studies on zebrafish and planarians, which have unique regenerative capabilities. Also, two Pakistani astronauts will begin training in China for a future joint mission to the space station. *—PTI*

Greece's maritime plans upset Turkey

ATHENS, 24 APRIL

Greece has unveiled its Maritime Spatial Planning strategy, covering tourism, offshore drilling, fishing, and environmental protection, prompting a stern response from neighbouring Turkey, which claims the plans infringe upon its maritime jurisdiction. This announcement follows a rebuke from the European Court of Justice for Greece's failure to submit required plans to the European Commission. Turkey's Foreign Ministry accused Greece of violating its jurisdiction in the Aegean Sea and Eastern Mediterranean, reiterating that both countries should cooperate on maritime issues rather than take unilateral actions. The Greek Foreign Ministry expressed a desire for positive relations, and willingness to continue discussions on outstanding issues. *—PTI*

Istanbul residents rattled after earthquake

ISTANBUL, 24 APRIL

Many residents of Istanbul spent the night outdoors after a powerful 6.2-magnitude earthquake rattled the city, triggering over 180 aftershocks. With a shallow depth of 10 kilometres, the quake struck southwest of Istanbul in the Sea of Marmara, leaving the city's 16 million inhabitants anxious amidst fears of stronger tremors. At least 236 people were treated for injuries, many resulting from panic-induced jumps from buildings. Evacuationswere carried out in 12 buildings. The Turkish disaster agency, AFAD, confirmed a wave of aftershocks,.Seismologists warned the region, could face a stronger tremor in the future, following the devastating 2023 earthquake that claimed over 53,000 lives. *—PTI*

Nepal celebrates 19th Democracy Day

KATHMANDU, 24 APRIL

Nepal is commemorating its 19th Lokatantra Diwas, or Democracy Day, on Thursday, paying tribute to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives in the struggle for democracy and the abolition of monarchy. The day marks the historic reinstatement of the dissolved parliament on 24 April 2006, ending King Gyanendra's direct rule. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli is scheduled to address a youth celebration at Bhrikutimandap, expected to draw around 100,000 participants. The festivities will include music concerts, dance performances, and culinary offerings from various ethnic groups across the nation. Political leaders have expressed well wishes, emphasizing the importance of unity for the country's prosperity. Following the people's movement in 2006, the monarchy was officially abolished on 28 May 2008, establishing Nepal as a secular, federal democratic republic. *—PTI*

China denies it is in talks with US

Beijing says 'abolish unilateral tariffs on China for talks to begin'

BEIJING, 24 APRIL

China on Thursday seemed to rebuff any olive branch extended by US President Donald Trump earlier, as it denied any talks with the US to reach a deal on tariffs. It said there was "no factual basis" for any claims of progress in the bilateral talks.

"China and the US are not having consultation or negotiation on tariffs, still less reaching a deal," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a media briefing here reacting to reports of talks between the two countries.

In statements this week, US President Donald Trump appeared willing to reconsider the high tariffs he has levied on Chinese goods during his second term.

> "China and the US are not having consultations or negotiations on tariffs, still less reaching a deal" Guo Jiakun Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson

He has also suggested senior officials from Beijing had been in contact with Washington to start laying the groundwork for discussions on the matter, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

"This tariff war was launched by the US. China's position is consistent and clear. We will fight if it is a must. Our doors are open if the US wants to talk; dialogue and negotiation must be based on equality, respect, and mutual benefit," Guo said.

Separately, China's Commerce Ministry has said, US should abolish all unilateral tariffs if it wanted to resolve this issue.

"If the US truly wants to resolve the issue, it should heed rational voices from the international community and domestic stakeholders, completely abolish all unilateral tariffs on China, and find a solution through equal dialogue," He Yadong, commerce ministry spokesperson said.

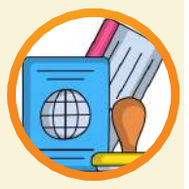
While escalating tariffs against China, Trump has paused his tariffs against the rest of the countries, including India, for 90 days, leaving Beijing isolated. *—PTI*

New York leads a dozen US states to sue Trump on tariffs

Washington, 24 April

A coalition of 12 states in US have filed a lawsuit aiming to block President Donald Trump's spate of tariffs that has upended global trade. The suit, which is led by New York's governor and attorney general, argues that tariffs must be approved by Congress and questioned Trump invoking a 1970s law called the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to enact the levies. The lawsuit argues that the law does not grant Trump the power he claims to derive from it. The act has never been used to issue tariffs by any president, congressional research shows. White House Kush Desai said, "administration remains committed to using its full legal authority to confront the distinct national emergencies our country is currently facing—both the scourge of illegal migration and fentanyl flows across our border and the exploding annual U.S. goods trade deficit." *—Agencies*

Free US visa for 41 nations



Citizens of 41 countries can now enter the United States without a visa for 90 days or less under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Countries in EU, Australia, South Korea, New Zealand and Taiwan are in the list but excludes India. One may apply for a visitor (B) visa if not eligible for VWP travel. Staying longer than 90 days will require a visa application. Travellers from the 41 countries on the VWP list, can skip the US visa as long as they meet all requirements, according to the official US Department of State website. *—Agencies*

INDIA MAY BE 1ST TO SIGN TRADE DEAL WITH US

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 24 APRIL

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has said he expects India to strike the first bilateral trade deal to avoid President Donald Trump's reciprocal tariffs as it had fewer tariff and non-tariff barriers, according to the New York Post.

"World's most populous nation doesn't have "so many high tariffs. India also has fewer non-tariff trade barriers, obviously, no currency manipulation, very little government subsidies, so that reaching a deal with the Indians is much easier," Bessent said at the DC event on the sidelines of the annual World Bank and International Monetary Fund meetings.

The New York Post quoted data from to Census Bureau India accounted for nearly 3 per cent of imported goods to the US as of February. The US had a USD 45.7 billion trade deficit with India in 2024, according to the Office of the US Trade Representative.

India is presently subject to a 10 per cent tariff under the existing policy.

Earlier on Tuesday, US Vice President JD Vance in Jaipur urged India to drop non-tariff barriers, give greater access to its markets and buy more American energy and military hardware. *—PTI*

STOP!: Don slams Putin over Kyiv attack

KYIV, 24 APRIL

In a first public rebuke of Russian President Vladimir Putin, US President Donald Trump called on him to halt devastating strikes on Ukraine evn as the latest attacks killed atleast 9 people and injured more than 70.

"I am not happy with the Russian strikes on KYIV. Not necessary, and very bad timing. Vladimir, STOP! 5000 soldiers a week are dying," "Lets get the Peace Deal DONE!" Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform indicating his growing frustration with the lack of progress in peace talks.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a Telegram post that he will fly back to Kyiv after meeting with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa whose support he sought to end his country's war with Russia, now in its fourth year.

At least 42 people were hospitalized in Kyiv, Ukraine's State Emergency Service said. Rescue operations were still underway early morning Thursday to find bodies under the rubble.

The attack on Kyiv came hours after peace negotiations appeared to stall, with President Donald Trump lashing out at Zelenskyy, accusing him of prolonging the peace deal by not ceding Crimea to Russia as part of a potential peace plan.

Rubio withdrew from a planned meeting Wednesday involving top US, British, French and Ukrainian diplomats to discuss a ceasefire agreement. *—PTI*

Rescue workers clear the rubble after a Russian strike in a residential negibhourhood in Kyiv, Ukraine Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

> **I am not happy with Russian strikes on Kyiv. Not necessary and very bad timing. Vladimir, STOP! 5000 soldiers are dying. Lets get the peace deal DONE!**
>
> -Donald Trump, US President

Thousands view Pope at Vatican

So many mourners lined up to catch a glimpse of the Pope Francis lying in state in a simple wooden coffin inside St Peter's Basilica before the ceremony on Saturday. The Vatican kept the doors open all night due to higher-than-expected turnout, The basilica was bathed in a hushed silence as mourners from across the globe make a slow, shuffling procession up the main aisle to pay their last respects to Francis, who died Monday after a stroke. More than 20,000 people paid their respects during the first 8 ½ hours of the public viewing on Wednesday. After 3 days of public viewing, a funeral Mass including heads of state will be held Saturday in St Peter's Square. The Pope will be buried in a niche within the St Mary Major Basilica near his favourite Madonna icon. *—PTI*

Thousands of people queued up for hours to pay their last respects to Pope Francis on Thursday **PHOTO: X @VaticanNews**

TOP COURT SLAMS FRANCE ON RAPE

PARIS, 24 APRIL

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) condemned France for violating articles of the European Convention on Human Rights saying that French authorities did not do enough to protect three women who were raped when they were aged 13, 14 and 16.

In one case of a girl who said she was assaulted by firefighters, the court found that French authorities failed "to protect the applicant's dignity, by permitting the use of moralising and guilt-inducing statements, which propagated gender stereotypes and were capable of impairing victims' confidence in the justice system". It noted there "lack of promptness and diligence in the conduct of the criminal proceedings" in two of three cases. *—PTI*

South Korea's former president indicted for alleged bribery

SEOUL, 24 APRIL

South Korean prosecutors indicted former liberal President Moon Jae-in on bribery charges on Thursday, saying that a budget airline gave his son-in-law a lucrative job during Moon's term in office.

Moon, who served as President from 2017-2022, received bribes totalling 217 million Won (USD 151,705) from Lee Sang-jik, founder of the budget carrier Thai Eastar Jet, in the form of wages, housing expenses and other financial assistance provided to his then -son-in-law.

Moon's daughter and her husband were reportedly divorced in 2021.

Lee was also indicted on charges of paying bribes to Moon and committing breaches of trust.

Moon Jae-in **PHOTO: X**

Moon performed political favours for Lee for working on his campaign.

Lee also became the head of the state-funded Korea SME and Startups Agency and was nominated by Moon's party to run for parliament, but prosecutors did not find any evidence that Moon helped Lee win those positions.

There was no immediate response from Moon.

Moon's indictment comes before South Korea elects a new President on 3 June to succeed ousted conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol.

It's unclear if Moon's indictment will influence prospects for liberals to win back the presidency.

Moon is best known for his push to reconcile with rival North Korea and facilitate the high-stakes nuclear diplomacy between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump. *—PTI*

Jawbone in Taiwan linked to mysterious ancestors

TAIPEI, 24 APRIL

An ancient jawbone discovered in Taiwan is believed to belong to the enigmatic Denisovans, an extinct group of human relatives that coexisted with Neanderthals and Homo sapiens, scientists announced on Thursday. Denisovan fossils are rare, primarily found in Siberia and Tibet. The jawbone, initially recovered from the Penghu Channel seafloor and later donated to Taiwan's National Museum of Natural Science, the fossil has been dated to the Pleistocene era. Ancient DNA analysis seemed impossible. Researchers extracted protein sequences similar to a Siberian Denisovan. While findings are promising, experts urge caution, as further data is needed to confirm the fossil's origins. *—PTI*

A virtual reconstruction of the Denisovan jawbone found on the Tibetan Plateau **PHOTO: Jean-Jacques Hublin/ MPI-EVA**

THUMBS DOWN TO TERROR

Pak stock exchange plunges 2,000 points

ISLAMABAD, 24 APRIL

Bearish sentiment continued on the trade floor at the Pakistan Stock Exchange on Thursday with shares plunging more than 2,000 points. This was a day after India announced a slew of diplomatic measures targeting Pakistan following a deadly attack in occupied Kashmir that resulted in the deaths of over two dozen tourists, according to 'The Dawn' newspaper'.

The benchmark KSE-100 index declined by 1,086.51, or 0.93 per cent, to stand at 116,139.63 from the previous close at 11.13am. At 2.56pm, the index plunged 2,116.92, or 1.81 per cent, to stand at 115,109.22.

Yousuf M Farooq, director research at Chase Securities, said, "The market opened lower amid fears of escalating tensions between Pakistan and India. However, positive corporate earnings have supported a partial recovery," he noted.

Markets reacted negatively to the political tensions between the two countries after the terror attack **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE**

"Going forward, investor sentiment will hinge on the trajectory of India-Pakistan relations, upcoming corporate results, and the monetary policy decision expected in early May." he said.

In a major escalation of regional geopolitical tensions, India suspended the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) with Pakistan with immediate effect in the wake of an attack in Kashmir's Pahalgam a day ago. Pakistan, in response, has convened a meeting of the National Security Committee to discuss the situation.

Experts said investors remained cautious, and were weighing additional responses from India and Pakistan. *—Agencies.*

Rupee gains 16 paise to settle at 85.29 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 24 APRIL

After a two-day pause, the rupee gained 16 paise to 85.29 against the US dollar on Thursday, on weak greenback and overnight decline in crude oil prices. Forex traders said the rupee strengthened on the weak US dollar and overnight decline in crude oil prices amid slowing US business activity. The US Treasury yields also declined with the 10-year yield falling 3 basis points to 4.35 per cent. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.60 and moved between the intra-day high of 85.25 and the low of 85.67 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.29 (provisional), registering a gain of 16 paise over its previous closing level. On Wednesday, the rupee depreciated 26 paise and settled for the day at 85.45 against the US dollar. *—PTI*

USFDA approves Lupin's generic kidney drug

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

Pharma major Lupin Ltd on Thursday said it has received approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) for its generic version of Tolvaptan tablets indicated for a certain type of kidney disease. The approval by the US health regulator is for the abbreviated new drug application for Tolvaptan tablets of strengths 15 mg, 30 mg, 45 mg, 60 mg and 90 mg, Lupin said in a regulatory filing. These are bioequivalent to Jynarque tablets in the same strengths of Otsuka Pharmaceutical Company Ltd, it added. "Lupin is the exclusive first-to-file for this product and is eligible for 180 days of generic drug exclusivity. This product will be manufactured at Lupin's Nagpur facility and launched soon," the company said. *—PTI*

Lifestyle magazine HELLO! enters Indian market

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

The India Today Group on Wednesday announced that it will launch the Indian edition of the Hello! Magazine to set an editorial benchmark for celebrity and lifestyle content, a statement by the group said. The Group publishes lifestyle magazines Harper's Bazaar and Cosmopolitan. HELLO! was established in 1955 in Spain and is one of the world's largest celebrity magazines. Currently present in 19 countries, the magazine is renowned for its extraordinary visual treatment of the lives of celebrities, home of the rich and famous, fashion, beauty, art, travel, food and exclusive access to some of the world's most inaccessible personalities. The brand attracts over 40 million users across the globe. *—PTI*

Govt offers sops to boost coal mining

Reforms address challenges of high capital investment and longer gestation period

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

The push for underground mining aligns with the country's drive for sustainable coal production *PHOTO: X*

In a bid to speed up the operationalisation of underground coal blocks, the government on Thursday announced new incentives like waiving off of the upfront payment.

The push for underground coal mining aligns with the country's drive for sustainable coal production.

"In a decisive step towards revitalising India's coal sector, the Ministry of Coal has introduced a series of transformative policy measures aimed at promoting underground coal mining," an official statement said.

These reforms address the challenges of high capital investment and longer gestation period.

"The floor percentage of revenue share for underground coal mines has been reduced from 4 per cent to 2 per cent. This targeted reduction offers substantial fiscal relief and enhances the financial viability of underground projects," the statement said.

The mandatory upfront payment requirement for underground mining ventures has been completely waived. This measure removes a financial barrier, encouraging broader participation from the private sector and facilitating faster project implementation.

These incentives are further complemented by an existing 50 per cent rebate on performance security for underground coal blocks, collectively lowering the entry threshold and facilitating smoother project implementation.

Underground coal mining is more environment-friendly, as it causes significantly less surface disruption compared to opencast mining. These policy measures are expected to encourage the adoption of advanced technologies such as continuous miners, longwall systems, remote sensing tools, and AI-based safety mechanisms which will boost productivity while ensuring ecological balance. *—PTI*

- The upfront payment for has been completely waived. This measure removes a financial barrier, encouraging broader participation from the private sector and facilitating faster project implementation

The dangers of coal mining

- Coal mining destroys forests, disrupts ecosystems and contaminates water and soil
- Water runoff from coal mines can become acidic, harming aquatic life
- Coal combustion releases pollutants such as sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and particulate. matter, leading to smog and acid rain
- Burning coal releases greenhouse gases, contributing to climate change
- Coal dust inhalation can lead to black lung disease in miners
- Explosions, mine collapses endanger miners' life

Biggest coal mines in India

1. Gevra, in Chhattisgarh
2. Kusmunda in Chhattisgarh.
3. Jharia Coalfield in Jharkhand
4. Talcher Coalfield in Odisha
5. Singrauli in Madhya Pradesh

The 30-share Bombay Stock Exchange benchmark declined 315.06 points, or 0.39 per cent, to settle at 79,801.43 on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

Markets decline after 7-day rally

MUMBAI, 24 APR

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Thursday amid profit-taking after a seven-day rally and disappointing earnings from Hindustan Unilever.

Selling in blue-chips ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel and a largely muted trend in Asian and European equities also dragged the markets lower.

The 30-share BSE benchmark declined 315.06 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 79,801.43. During the day, it dropped 391.94 points or 0.48 per cent to 79,724.55.

The NSE Nifty went down by 82.25 points or 0.34 per cent to 24,246.70.

In the past seven trading days, the BSE benchmark gauge zoomed 6,269.34 points or 8.48 per cent and the Nifty jumped 1,929.8 points or 8.61 per cent.

From the Sensex firms, FMCG major Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) dropped 4 per cent after the firm reported a decline of 3.35 per cent in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,475 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2025 on lower margins. Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Eternal, Mahindra & Mahindra, HCL Technologies, HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tata Consultancy Services and Bajaj Finance were also among the laggards. *—PTI*

Nestle India Q4 profit drops 6.5%

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

The Nestle India Ltd on Thursday reported 6.5 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at ₹ 873.46 crore for March quarter FY25 as the FMCG industry faced food inflation and moderation in urban consumption. The company posted a profit of ₹ 934.17 crore for the January-March period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing from Nestle India. Sales revenue was up at ₹5,447.64 crore in the quarter as against ₹5,254.43 crore a year ago. *—PTI*

Gold gains ₹200 amid US–China tariff tensions; hits ₹99,400/10gm

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

Gold prices witnessed a rise of Rs 200, reaching Rs 99,400 per 10g in the national capital on Thursday, propelled by renewed buying from stockists and jewellers, alongside a weakening US dollar, as reported by the All India Sarafa Association. This follows a recent decline of Rs 2,400, during which gold briefly dropped to Rs 99,200 per 10g.

The rate for gold of 99.5 per cent purity also rose by Rs 200 to Rs 98,900 per 10g, up from Rs 98,700. Comments by US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent regarding the ongoing trade standoff between the US and China indicated a prolonged period of negotiations, exacerbating market uncertainty. Furthermore, reports of potential new tariffs from President Donald Trump heightened demand for the safe-haven asset.

Amidst these developments, silver prices increased by Rs 700, reaching Rs 99,900 per kg, compared to the previous closing of Rs 99,200. In the futures market, gold contracts for June delivery climbed by Rs 1,046, or 1.1 per cent, to Rs 95,768 per 10g on the Multi Commodity Exchange.

Market analysts suggest that recent shifts in the US trade strategy have contributed to a volatile economic outlook, making gold a more attractive investment. Global spot gold rose by USD 47.16, or 1.43 per cent, to USD 3,335.50 per ounce, as investor sentiment remained cautious amid uncertainties regarding US-China trade discussions. Upcoming US economic data is anticipated to further influence bullion prices. *—PTI*

Gensol shares hit 53-week low

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

The stock dropped 4.96 per cent to Rs 95.80, its lowest trading permissible limit for the day, on Thursday *PHOTO: X@BNUTHAN*

Shares of Gensol Engineering continued tumbling on Thursday and fell by 5 per cent to hit another lower circuit level as the company refuted reports claiming that its promoters Anmol Singh Jaggi and Puneet Singh Jaggi are likely to be summoned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with the Mahadev Betting app case.

The Sebi, through its interim order on Tuesday last week, barred brothers Anmol Singh Jaggi and Puneet Singh Jaggi from accessing the securities markets until further notice.

The action comes amid accusations of siphoning off loan funds from their publicly listed company Gensol Engineering for personal use, raising concerns over corporate governance and financial misconduct.

The stock dropped 4.96 per cent to Rs 95.80 – its lowest trading permissible limit for the day as well as 52-week low level – on the BSE. At the NSE, it dived 5 per cent to hit the lower circuit as well as 52-week low of Rs 94.91. From its 52-week high of Rs 1,125.75, the stock has lost 91.49 per cent so far. The stock has been tumbling for 11 trading days, including Thursday.

Gensol Engineering is engaged in providing solar consulting services, engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) services.

Additionally, Sebi directed Gensol Engineering to put its planned stock split into the ratio of 1:10 on hold. The Corporate Affairs Ministry on Monday said it will take necessary action in the Gensol Engineering matter after examining market regulator Sebi's order against the company. *—PTI*

TRUMP POLICIES COULD HIT GLOBAL TRADE, SAYS WTO

GENEVA, 24 APRIL

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) says the volume of global trade is likely to decrease by 0.2 per cent due to US President Donald Trump's shifting tariff policies and a standoff with China. It would decline further if Trump carries through on his toughest "reciprocal" tariffs.

The trade decline will be particularly steep in North America even without the stiffest tariffs, the global trade forum said, with exports there expected to fall by 12.6 per cent and imports by 9.6 per cent this year. Though world trade was expected to expand in 2025 and 2026, economists have now downgraded their forecast. Global trade would slump by 1.5 per cent if Trump follows through on his stiffest tariffs on most nations. *—PTI*

POLITICS HITS SALES

Musk dented Tesla image in months, fixing may take longer

NEW YORK, 24 APRIL

Elon Musk has been called a Moonshot Master, the Edison of Our Age and the Architect of the Future, but he's got a big problem at his car company and it's not clear he can fix it – the damage done to Tesla.

Sales have plunged for Tesla amid protests and boycotts over Musk's embrace of Far Right-wing views. Profits have been sliced by two-thirds this year, and rivals from China, Europe and the US are pouncing.

On Tuesday came some relief as Musk announced in an earnings call with investors that he would be scaling back his government cost-cutting job in Washington to a "day or two per week" to focus more on his old job as Tesla's boss.

Investors pushed up Tesla's stock 5 per cent Wednesday, though there are plenty of challenges ahead.

Who wants a Tesla?

Musk seemed to downplay the role that brand damage played in the drop in first-quarter sales on the investor call. Instead, he emphasised something more fleeting — an upgrade to Tesla's best-selling Model Y that forced a shutdown of factories and pinched supply and demand.

While financial analysts noted that potential buyers probably held back while waiting for the upgrade, hurting results, even the most bullish among them say the brand damage is real, and more worrisome.

"This is a full-blown crisis," said Wedbush Securities' normally upbeat Dan Ives earlier this month. In a note to its clients, JP Morgan warned of "unprecedented brand damage."

Musk's take on the protests

Musk dismissed the protests against Tesla on the call as the work of people angry at his leadership of the Department of Government Efficiency because "those who are receiving the waste and fraud wish it to continue."

But the protests in Europe, thousands of miles from Washington, came after Musk supported Far-Right politicians there. Angry Europeans hung Musk in effigy in Milan, projected an image of him doing a straight-arm salute on a Tesla factory in Berlin and put up posters in London urging people not to buy "Swasticars" from him.

Sales in Europe have gone into a free fall in the first three months of this year — down 39 per cent. In Germany, sales plunged 62 per cent.

Another worrying sign: On Tuesday, Tesla backed off its earlier promise that sales would recover this year after dropping in 2024 for the first time a dozen years. Tesla said the global trade situation was too uncertain and declined to repeat the forecast.

Here come the rivals

Meanwhile, Tesla's competition is stealing its customers.

Among its fiercest rivals now is Chinese giant BYD. Earlier this year, the EV maker announced it had developed an electric battery that can charge within minutes. And Tesla's European rivals have begun offering new models with advanced technology that is making them real Tesla alternatives just as popular opinion has turned against Musk.

Tesla's share of the EV market in the US has dropped from two-thirds to less than half, according to Cox Automotive.

Pinning hopes on cybercabs

Another rival, Google parent Alphabet, is already ahead of Tesla in an area that Musk has promised will help remake his company: Cybercabs.

One of the highlights of Tesla's call Tuesday was Musk sticking with his previous prediction that it will launch driverless cabs without steering wheels and pedals in Austin, Texas, in June, and in other cities soon after.

But Google's service, called Waymo, already has logged millions of driverless cybercab trips in San Francisco, Phoenix, Los Angeles, and Austin as part of a partnership with ride-hailing leader Uber.

On the positive side

In competition with rivals in the US, Tesla currently has one clear advantage: It will get hurt by less by tariffs because most of its vehicles are built in the countries where they are sold, including those in its biggest market, the US. *—PTI*

TESLA RIVAL VINFAST TO ENTER INDIA

HANOI, 24 APRIL

Electric vehicle maker VinFast, a rival of Tesla, is planning to open an assembly plant in India by the end of June as the Vietnamese company shifts its focus to Asia, its chief said on Thursday.

"In the near future, apart from the Vietnamese market, we will focus more on Indonesia, India, and the Philippines markets," Pham Nhat Vuong told shareholders of VinFast's parent company Vingroup.

The startup had initially planned to focus on the US for its foreign sales, but slow progress in that country, even before growing uncertainty caused by US tariffs, pushed the company to change its strategy, media reports said.

Tesla considers India an attractive market but has expressed concerns over duties. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: X

Iga is 'going through the worst' after doping ban

PARIS, 24 APRIL

Iga Swiatek admits the strict doping protocols can be stressful for players, but feels like she has "been through the worst" after surviving her positive test over contaminated melatonin. Paranoia has spread amongst tennis players after both Swiatek and Jannik Sinner failed drug tests without committing any intentional doping. Swiatek served a one-month suspension at the end of last year after the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) accepted that the over-the-counter melatonin she had taken as a sleep aid was contaminated with the banned substance trimetazidine.—*PTI*

Animesh sets 200m national record with 20.40 sec effort

KOCHI, 24 APRIL

Odisha sprinter Animesh Kujur ran a blazing 200m race as he smashed the 200m national record, clocking 20.40 seconds to win the gold medal on the final day of the National Federation Senior Athletics Competition here on Thursday. The 21-year-old Kujur, who had earlier won a silver in men's 100m, ran a brilliant race to better Amlan Borgohain's earlier national record of 20.52 seconds set in 2022. Borgohain, representing Reliance, finished second with 20.80 seconds. With his 20.40 seconds effort, Kujur became the current Asian leader and joint 35th best in the world in the season so far. Kujur, however, missed the World Championships qualifying time of 20.16 seconds.—*PTI*

Mandaviya launches Digilocker for athletes

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

To ensure hassle-free record-keeping, Sports Minister Mansukh launched the Digilocker facility for athletes, saying it would be mandatory for national federations to digitise certificates and other essential documents of sportspersons within the next one year.Mandaviya formally launched the initiative in the presence of representatives from 40 National Sports Federations, and some athletes, including Tokyo Olympics silver-winning weightlifter Mirabai Chanu and hockey player Jarmanpreet Singh, among others. I want to tell everyone that Digilocker is compulsory.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Newcastle's Eddie Howe returns to work after illness

NEWCASTLE, 24 APRIL

Newcastle manager Eddie Howe returned to work on Thursday after recovering from pneumonia. Howe was hospitalized after falling ill this month and missed his team's games against Manchester United, Crystal Palace, and Aston Villa. "Newcastle United are delighted to confirm that Eddie Howe has returned to his duties at the club's training centre," the Premier League club said in a statement. Newcastle is fifth in the standings and in contention to qualify for next season's Champions League. It plays Ipswich at St James' Park on Saturday.—*PTI*

Chennai take on Hyderabad in a battle for survival

Both sides have a turbulent season, just 4 points from 8 games

CHENNAI, 24 APRIL

The Chennai Super Kings will look to make a crucial turnaround at home when they face an equally desperate Sunrisers Hyderabad in a battle of survival in the Indian Premier League on Friday.

Both sides have endured a turbulent season, notching just four points from eight games, and must now win all remaining fixtures to keep their slim qualification hopes alive. Known to make the most of home conditions, five-time champions CSK find themselves in uncharted territory as they haven't been able to read the wickets well at the Chepauk. They started strong at their fortress, dominating the Mumbai Indians as Noor Ahmad spun a web around the visitors. But the early promise fizzled out quickly, with three successive losses at home.

They also endured the ignominy of posting their lowest-ever IPL total at home, 103/9 against Kolkata Knight Riders. Head coach Stephen Fleming has also voiced frustration over the Chepauk surface, which has offered more to seamers than CSK's usual spin-heavy attack.

Their away form has not been any better either, with just one win in four attempts.

CSK has lacked firepower in the batting department, and captain Ruturaj Gaikwad's absence due to an injury has only made the storied outfit worse.

MS Dhoni has returned as a full-time captain. While his knee continues to limit mobility, the former Indian captain's leadership remains invaluable.

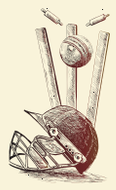
His death-overs batting, field placements, and ability to recalibrate the bowling attack could be key in CSK's revival.

In encouraging signs, 17-year-old Ayush Mhatre made a promising debut against MI with the bat. —*PTI*

Chennai Super Kings will eye a crucial turnaround at home when they face an equally desperate Sunrisers Hyderabad PHOTO: PTI

> Rohit Sharma to play a pivotal role in the team's pursuit of a record-extending sixth IPL title
>
> -Trent Boult, Mumbai Indians pacer

> Top-order collapse coupled with a wrong assessment of the pitch proved decisive in their crushing defeat to Mumbai Indians.
>
> -Daniel Vettori, SRH head coach



CKS VS SRH

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	21
CKS Won:	15
SRH Won:	6

CKS vs SRH Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

PAHALGAM TERROR ATTACK

BCCI sends tough message to Pak: Will not play

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

- The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) vice-president Rajeev Shukla reinforced that India will not play any bilateral cricket against Pakistan in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Kashmir's Pahalgam.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) vice-president Rajeev Shukla reinforced that India will not play any bilateral cricket against Pakistan in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Kashmir's Pahalgam.

India and Pakistan have not played a bilateral series since 2012-13 when Pakistan travelled to India for a limited-overs series. India last went to Pakistan in 2008.

The only time the two teams face each other is during international competitions, with Pakistan coming to India for the ODI World Cup 2023. However, India refused to travel to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy 2025 and their matches including the match against Pakistan and the final - were held in Dubai.

"We are with the victims, and we condemn it. Whatever our government says, we will do. We don't play with Pakistan in a bilateral series because of the government's stand. And we will not play with Pakistan in bilaterals going forward.

But when it comes to the ICC event, we play due to ICC engagement. ICC is also aware that whatever is happening, they will do it," he told Sports Tak. BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia also expressed his condolences over the attack.

On behalf of the BCCI, while condemning this ghastly and cowardly act with the strongest possible words, I extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and prayers for the departed souls. In sharing their pain and grief, we stand hand in hand at this hour of tragedy," Saikia said.

In a solemn gesture of solidarity and respect, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) paid tribute to the victims of the terror attack in Pahalgam. —*PTI*

Rajeev Shukla

Gautam Gambhir receives death threat email

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

The head coach of the India men's cricket team, Gautam Gambhir, has found himself at the centre of a security scare after he received threatening emails, Delhi Police said on Thursday.

The threats were received on 22 April, the same day terrorists gunned down 26 people, mostly tourists, in Kashmir's Pahalgam from a suspicious Gmail account.

"We have been informed about an alleged threat mail received on an email ID associated with Gautam Gambhir. The matter is being investigated," DCP (Central) M Harsha Vardhan said in a statement.

"Gautam Gambhir is already a Delhi Police protected, and we do not comment on specific security arrangements," the officer said in the statement.

Gambhir, a former BJP MP, reportedly received two threat mails reading "I KILL YOU" from a sender identifying as "ISIS Kashmir", police sources said.

An email complaint regarding the threats was received at the Rajinder Nagar police station along with screenshots of the threat emails. —*PTI*

Gautam Gambhir PHOTO: PTI

International Event Ambassador and Olympic Champion Dalilah Muhammad during a press conference ahead of TCS World 10K Marathon, in Bengaluru on Thursday PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Alcaraz withdraws from Madrid Open

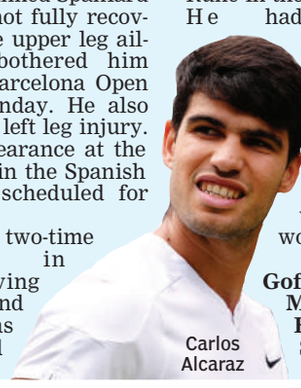
MADRID, 24 APRIL

Home-crowd favorite Carlos Alcaraz withdrew from the Madrid Open because of leg injuries.

The third-ranked Spaniard said he has not fully recovered from the upper leg ailment that bothered him during the Barcelona Open final last Sunday. He also said he has a left leg injury. His first appearance at the Caja Magica in the Spanish capital was scheduled for Saturday.

Alcaraz is a two-time champion in Madrid, having won in 2022 and 2023. He was the second seed this week and in the same half of the draw as Novak Djokovic.

Alcaraz needed treatment on his leg during his straight-set loss to Holger Rune in the Barcelona final. He had not practiced in Madrid yet, and said this week that he felt "fine" but was waiting on medical test results to determine whether he would play.



Carlos Alcaraz

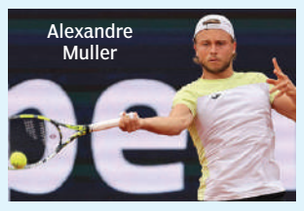
Goffin Retires, Muller Joins Humbert in the Second Round

The first French player in action on Thursday for the first round of the Madrid Masters 1000, Alexandre Muller, faced David Goffin in a high-profile match. The Belgian, who has previously reached the quarterfinals at Roland-Garros, has been regaining form in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, Muller won his first ATP Tour title in Hong Kong and has also proven his ability on clay, as shown by his run to the final at the ATP 500 tournament

Ranked 39th in the world this week, the Frenchman hopes to build momentum during this clay-court swing. Unfortunately, his match against Goffin did not end as he would have liked, as Goffin retired early in the third set (6-3, 3-6, 1-0 ret.).

The 34-year-old player, suffering from an ankle injury, was unable to continue. Muller even helped Goffin carry his belongings as he left the court. He will now face his compatriot Ugo Humbert for a spot in the third round in the Spanish capital. —*PTI*



Alexandre Muller

ASIAN BOXING C'SHIPS: 5 MORE INDIANS ADVANCE TO SFS

AMMAN, 24 APRIL

Five Indian boxers, including three boys and two girls, advanced to the semifinals of the Asian U-15 Championships here. From the men's U-15 championship, Nelson Khwairakpam (55 kg) secured a Referee Stops Contest (RSC) win in the first round over Chinese Taipei's Wang Sheng-Yang on the fifth day of competitions on Wednesday.

Abhijeet (61 kg) and Lakshay Phogat (64 kg) cruised to 5-0 victories against opponents from Kyrgyzstan and Jordan, respectively, in their quarterfinal bouts. Among the girls, Princi (52 kg) delivered a strong 5-0 result over Ukraine's Yeva Kubanova.

Samruddhi Satish Shinde (55 kg) wrapped up her bout with an RSC in the third round against Ukraine's Kseniia Savina.

Results:

Men's U-15 – Quarterfinals: 52 kg: Ravi Sihag (IND) lost to Elshod Shakirjonov (UZB) – WP 2:3

55 kg: Nelson Khwairakpam (IND) def. Wang Sheng-Yang (TPE) – RSC R1

58 kg: Naman Saini (IND) lost to Jakhongirjon Usmankulov (UZB) – WP 0:5

61 kg: Abhijeet (IND) def. Mukhammad Burkhanov (KGZ) – WP 5:0. —*PTI*

Princi (blue) reached the semi-final of women's 52 Kg at the Asian U15 Boxing Championships PHOTO: ASIA BOXING

All eyes on Praggnanandhaa

WARSAW, 24 APRIL

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa will be the cynosure of all eyes as he takes on a strong field sans Magnus Carlsen of Norway in the Superbet Rapid and blitz tournament, a part of the grand chess tour, that gets underway here on Saturday.

Alireza Firouzja, the Iranian-turned-French, starts as the hot bubble waiting to be busted, while his compatriot Maxime Vachier-Lagrave would like to live on the legacy built for the French players in the last decade.

While there are only two Indian contestants among the ten players, it remains to be seen who will win the Grand Chess Tour this year. —*PTI*

ITALIAN CUP FINAL

Milan ruins Inter's treble bid with derby win

MILAN, 24 APRIL

AC Milan hasn't achieved much this season, except when playing city rival Inter Milan.

Milan ruined Inter's bid for a treble and advanced to the Italian Cup final with a 3-0 derby win on Wednesday, courtesy of two goals from Luka Jovic. It was Milan's third win over Inter this season, having also beaten the Nerazzurri in the Italian Super Cup final in January.

"It was a very important game for us. As you know, we are not that good in Serie A. We had to show the quality today. We had to show the character," Jovic said. "And we showed it, and we are going to Rome." And if Milan can win another trophy, coach Sergio Conceicao might have a chance at keeping his job, despite the seven-time European champion sitting ninth in Serie A.

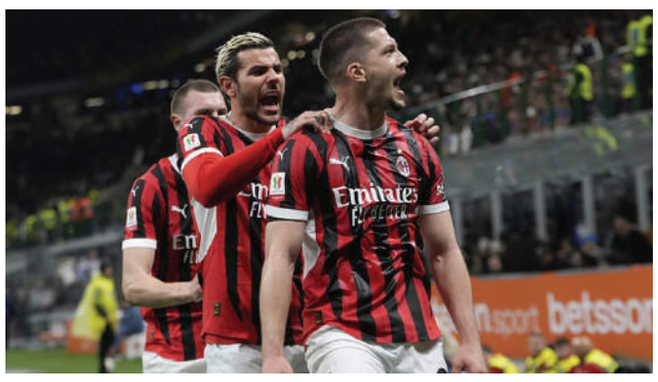
Winning the Italian Cup, which carries a Europa League berth, could be Milan's only route to a spot in continental play for next season.

Milan advanced on 4-1 aggregate following a 1-1 first leg.

Bologna brings a 3-0 lead over Empoli into the second leg of the other semifinal on Thursday. The final is scheduled for 14 May in Rome.

Inter pressed forward early on, and Federico Dimarco struck the crossbar in the 23rd minute. But Jovic put Milan ahead 13 minutes later with a powerful header and then doubled the advantage from close range shortly after the break.

Tijjani Reijnders added another for Milan in the 85th by finishing off a full team move. —*PTI*



Luka Jovic celebrates win against Inter PHOTO: X / @ACMILAN

Jamie Vardy to leave Leicester after 13 years

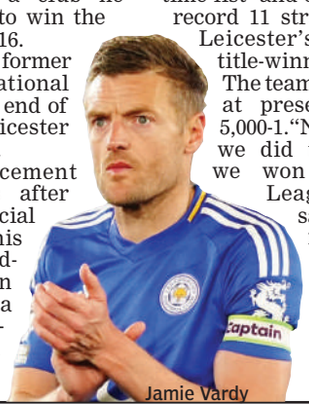
MADRID, 24 APRIL

Jamie Vardy is leaving Leicester City following its relegation from the Premier League, ending the striker's 13-year stay at a club he famously helped to win the English title in 2016.

The 38-year-old former England international will depart at the end of the season, Leicester said on Thursday.

The announcement came two days after Vardy took to social media to express his "anger and sadness" at a season he described as a "total embarrassment," with Leicester having been consigned to relegation with five matches to spare.

Vardy will go down as a Premier League great, having scored 143 goals placing him No. 15 on the competition's all-time list and once netted in a record 11 straight games in Leicester's improbable title-winning campaign. The team won the league at preseason odds of 5,000-1."Nine years ago, we did the impossible we won the Premier League," Vardy said in a video message on Instagram in which he also recounted winning the FA Cup in 2021 —*PTI*



Jamie Vardy